THE WHITE ELEPHANT (SEE PAGE 360).

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 403. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 19TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

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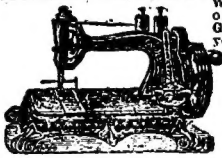

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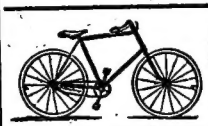

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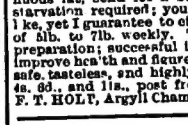

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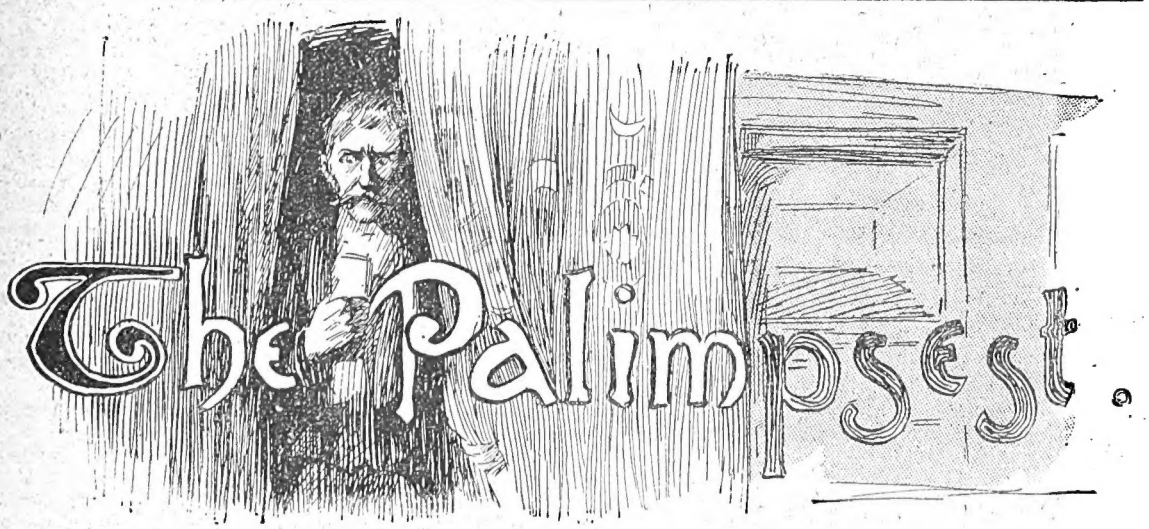

The Palimpsest.

I LITTLE expected when the Minister of Fine Arts commissioned me to secure for the French Government a palimpsest, that I was to witness—indeed, to play a small part in—a very moving tragedy. A palimpsest, as you know, is a manuscript of which the original text has been covered and new text super-imposed—generally the work of monks of the tenth century, who needed more parchments on which to inscribe their ecclesiastical writings. The re-agents of modern chemistry have made it possible to restore the original text, and some of the most precious gems of Greek and Latin literature have thus been redeemed from the desecrations of over-zealous clerics.

This particular parchment had been discovered to be a palimpsest in the last century; but it had been lost, before it could be deciphered, in the sacking of the Abbey of Faverney, in 1793, and had only recently been heard of again in the library of an eccentric Russian, Prince Volkine, who was suspected of being a Nihilist, and had died mysteriously a year before. The library of this Prince Volkine—curious name, Volkine, I thought; evidently of Slavic origin: *Vilko, vilk, vulk, volk,* Volkine the same root; meaning a wolf—was to be sold by his widow, and as other collectors and libraries would be after it, I lost no time in setting out for the Château de Doremont, where the princess resided.

That very evening I took the Basle express. In the compartment with me were a lady and gentleman to whom I paid no particular attention. As the train started, he drew out a bundle of papers and began to read them, and the lady, leaning her head comfortably against his shoulder, closed her eyes with a contented smile and settled herself for a nap. She was a dainty little woman, with fair hair, great black eyes, and a pale complexion. She was not pretty, however, a bulging forehead, thin lips, and a short nose, made her almost ugly. But her face beamed with the beauty that illumines the faces of all women who love and know themselves beloved.

Soothed by the movement of the train, I, too, soon dropped off to sleep. Suddenly I awoke with a start. Before me, kneeling in the middle of the compartment, was the man, motionless as if petrified with fear. His haggard eyes stared with dilated pupils straight before him; his parted lips moved in a vain effort to make a sound; and his right arm, stretched rigidly towards the open window, pointed out upon the moonlit plain. An almost unintelligible murmur now came from his lips. "The snow!" he stammered; "the snow! How cold it is, how cold!"

The young woman had sprung up in alarm. "Lucien, Lucien," she cried, "it is I—I who am here with you," and she tried to raise his inert body.

Suddenly the intensity of his gaze relaxed, his lips closed, and he burst into a peal of shrill laughter.

"Farewell, old wolf!" he cried, in a tone of concentrated hate; "the wolves will spare the wolf," and he fell back unconscious.

Now a strange change took place in the man. From beneath his lids two tears stole down his cheeks—he was weeping. And for some moments he wept, silently and motionless. The woman had taken him in her arms, now kissing his hands, now wiping his tears away with her handkerchief. Little by little his contracted limbs relaxed, he sighed deeply, and his eyes opened.

"What has happened?" he asked, in evident astonishment.

But the train had slackened up and stopped, the guard opened the door and cried "Jussy," and as this was my station, I bowed, and hastily stepped down upon the platform. As I left the train, I heard the great clock of some neighbouring church strike eleven.

I was driven over to the Château de Doremont the next morning, and found that the Princess Volkine was

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in Paris, but was expected to return any moment. When I explained my mission, the rotund little gentleman who received me stated that he was the father of the Vicomte Lucien de Hurecourt, who was to marry the princess on the morrow, and he was now escorting her home from Paris. His own name was Grand-Jacquot, he said, but his son had revived the ancient style of the family, Grand-Jacquot de Hurecourt, and was a very aristocratic young gentleman. I must defer my affair until after their return, and it would afford them all much pleasure if I would honour the wedding, a very quiet affair, with my presence. There was nothing for it but to accept the worthy man's hospitable offer.

After some refreshment, M. Grand-Jacquot led me to the library. It was a large and sombre room, with books

The lady . . . closed her eyes with a contented smile.

of all kinds and manuscripts of all ages filling the shelves to the ceiling. In the middle of the room was a square table, and on it were a folio volume in red morocco—the catalogue, doubtless—two silver candlesticks, with half-burned wax candles in them, a bronze inkstand, pens, and an eraser. But what first attracted my attention was the great fireplace, with a great stone chimney. Carved upon its otherwise plain surface was a striking device—a wolf's head, sable, with eyes, gules, on a silver field. This black head, staring sharply out from the white base, glared ferociously and fantasically, like a wolf of the Ukraine. It was crowned with the coronet of a prince, and on a scroll beneath was the legend, written in capital letters: *Volke ne volk volku.*

"The wolf is not a wolf to the wolf," said I, translating it literally.

"Exactly," said M. Grand-Jacquot; "it is derived from a family legend," and he repeated it to me, though I was already familiar with it from a Byzantine manuscript—John Stilitzes, I think. In the time of the Dukes Rurik and Oleg, it ran, among the Malo—Russian worshippers of the god Teroun, the golden-bearded Jupiter of the Slavs—lived a Prince Volkine, a mighty hunter and redoubtable brigand, who amused himself with training wolves. He had formed a pack of them with which he ravaged the lands of his neighbours. He had made pets of three wolf-cubs, bringing them up like domestic dogs; the beasts even ate at his table and slept in his chamber. In a certain battle, the bandit was wounded and fell from his horse. His enemies were about to dispatch him, when the wolves, like a faithful body-guard, flew to his aid and put the strangers to flight.

"I would amend my translation of the legend," said I, when he had finished. "The idea, more concisely put, is: 'The wolf spares the wolf.'"

"A lying legend!" sneered a mocking voice behind me, and turning, I saw that a man and woman, in travelling dress, had entered the room while we were talking. I could not repress a slight movement of surprise, for in them I recognised my travelling companions of the preceeding night.

"Marfa, Lucien!" cried M. Grand-Jacquot; "ah, you naughty children, how late you are! I expected you all last night, and have been quite uneasy about you." Then presenting them to me: "The Vicomte de Hurecourt, my son, and the Princess Volkine, who is soon to be my daughter, M. Stéphane Chéraval."

"To what are we indebted for the honour of your visit?" inquired the Vicomte curtly.

"M. Chéraval is a *savant* whom the Minister of Fine Arts has sent for a palimpsest," replied M. Grand-Jacquot; "doubtless the one that Prince Volkine used to treat with acids and scratch with an eraser so incessantly."

His words startled me, but not so much but that I could notice the Vicomte's sudden nervousness and the trembling voice in which he replied.

"The palimpsest has disappeared," he said.

"Disappeared?" I cried.

"Yes, a week ago. I have searched everywhere for it without success. It must have been stolen."

"Stolen—who can have taken it?"

"There is but one person—Anton Mikhail."

The Princess had not yet spoken, seeming disconcerted by my presence. But now, turning to Lucien, she said, in an indignant tone: "No, no; you malign him. Anton Mikhail is a saint, he would rather die than commit a sin. But come, we must go and receive Judge Bardene, whom Lucien invited this morning to be one of the witnesses of our marriage. That is why we are so late, for Lucien got tickets for Lure instead of only Jussy." And she led the Vicomte away, the old gentleman following them. Left alone, I hastened to the table, and, with a trembling hand, seized the catalogue. The folio opened as of its own accord at "Manuscripts." It was an admirable catalogue, each entry being carefully made with full particulars. The first read as follows:

No. 1. Psalter, without commentary, of the tenth century. Twelve pages. Incomplete and mutilated, comprising only the 114th, 119th, 129th, 137th, and 145th psalms; the psalms of the office of the dead in the Latin ritual. Mentioned by the Benedictine dom Loysilleau. Procured from the pillage of the Abbey of Faverney.

In a trembling hand—doubtless that of the Prince Volkine—was added this note: "*Palimpsest. Very precious. The Milesian of Lucius of Patras.*"

Unconsciously I had picked up the eraser that lay on the table and now I saw that particles of parchment adhered to the sharp steel, that it had evidently been lately used. As I was studying this, a shadow fell upon

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the table, and, lifting my eyes, I saw at the window a strange being, whom I knew at once for Anton Mikhail of whom the Princess Volkine had spoken. Dressed in a long robe of soiled white cotton, he bore in his arms several planks of pine wood. From his belt depended a bag, in which were nails and a hammer. Then he had considered me well, he entered the library, crossed the room, and set down his burden by the wall. Then, without a word to me, he began to adjust his planks, and nail them together, droning to himself meanwhile a monotonous chant that I remembered to have heard before in the Ukraine.

"Little father——" I began in the same tongue.

No answer.

"Anton Mikhail, what are you doing?"

"You can see," said he, without desisting from his work; "I am building an altar."

"An altar! What for?"

"The little mother, the Princess, is to be married. You should know that, since you are invited to the wedding."

"And you think, Anton Mikhail," said I, smiling, "that the Princess will kneel before your altar?"

"Listen," he said, leaving his work, and coming to stand before me; "the daughter of Anna Petrovna, the freed serf, the wife chosen by the noble wolf Volkine, is, in spite of her sin, neither a pagan or a lost soul. She will kneel before the God—my God, and here." And turning to his work, he resumed his monotonous chant.

"Man of God," I said, "do you know of what you are accused? They say you have stolen."

Anton Mikhail turned, and pointing towards heaven with one finger, said: "Listen once more. God is the public witness of the most secret crimes; at His chosen hour He will denounce. He will speak if I am guilty."

At this moment a servant entered, and announcing that they waited dinner for me, led the way to the drawing-room. Here I was introduced to Judge Bardene, and the Princess Volkine taking his arm, M. Grand-Jacquot, the Vicomte, and I followed to the dining-room.

"Father," said the Princess to M. Grand-Jacquot, "will you aid me to do the honours of my house? M. Chéraval at your right, Lucien at your left." The judge placed his hand upon the chair at her right, and seeing her seat herself was about to follow her example.

"No, no, my dear judge, not at my right—here," she said, indicating the chair at her left. "Valentin," said she, to the servant, "tell him we are awaiting him." Then, noticing the judge's disconcerted air, she added: "You will excuse me when I tell you that in my house the place of honour is always reserved for God—that is, in the person of one of His Messiahs."

While she was speaking, M. Bardene was casting very singular glances about from under his spectacles; and it was Lucien whom he presently addressed.

"So, M. de Hurecourt," he asked, "you do not believe in expiatory Messiahs, perhaps not even in expiations?"

"I hate charlatans, under whatever robe they appear," replied Lucien drily, and the conversation turned to other topics.

At the conclusion of the dinner, we went out upon the terrace, where coffee was served. It was a balmy August evening, and Judge Bardene discoursed charmingly of his early life, when he had been the friend of Mme. Récamier and Mme. Louise Collet. But his words were lost on us. I was thinking of the missing

"Anton Mikhail, what are you doing?"

palimpsest, Grand-Jacquot, of anything but Bardene's talk, and the Princess watched Lucien with loving eyes, as he sat back and let his gaze wander over the moonlit scene before us.

Presently he rose, and, motioning the Princess to join him, began to stroll up and down the terrace.

The loving couple had passed and repassed us several times, when suddenly Lucien started back. The gaunt figure of the priest had appeared from behind a bush and stood confronting them.

Lucien clenched his fist tightly, and strode up to the fanatic.

"For my sake, Lucien," she cried, "do not strike him. And you, Anton Mikhail—leave us. I cannot see you now." She had stepped up to the "man of God," and seizing his hand, would have kissed it.

"You shall hear me!" he said hoarsely; "I am your prophet, and your expiator. You shall hear me! Listen, Marfa—I have watched, and I have fasted. I have prayed and prayed. Then the dead appeared to me; his spirit has descended upon me, and his soul has united itself to my soul. It said to me: 'Go to my well-beloved, and tell her that, if she wishes, I will forgive her.' Do you wish it, my daughter?"

"I do not wish to be separated from Lucien," she said, in a low voice, pressing herself against the Vicomte's arm.

Anton Mikhail burst into a scornful laugh; then he cried, with growing excitement:

"He is so just, and so good, the noble wolf Volkine! Do you remember, Marfa?—your father was a serf, a kholop, a brute with a human face. Volkine was pleased to free him, he was his redeemer. And you—

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he took you from out the dust, and lifted you as high as himself. To your father he gave the liberty that makes a man, to you he gave the knowledge that should make a saint. He has made you the equal of queens—he married you. But you, Princess Volkine, you?—oh, you!

"And so, poor woman," he went on, "to-morrow you wish to consummate your sin, to bind your life to that man—a blasphemer, an atheist! You wish to lose your soul for ever, and abandon it to torture! You shall not do it, Princess—I forbid you! But do not tremble so, and understand me well"—his voice became low and supplicating—"ah, my child, if you hearken to me, to-morrow you will repent your sins and purify yourself for ever. To-morrow will your pardon come; to-morrow will you gain Paradise!"

"To-morrow we shall square accounts, you thief," cried Lucien, trembling with rage; "come, Marfa, this farce has lasted long enough."

Anton Mikhail turned slowly towards him, and looked him straight in the eye.

"You, too, to-morrow—you will come to pardon; yes, to-morrow. The dead wishes it—the dead commands it!"

"You dare threaten me!" cried Lucien, and he sprang at the priest with clenched fist.

But he did not strike Anton Mikhail. Just then the great clock of Doremont began to strike the eleventh hour. Lucien turned pale as a ghost and trembled in every limb.

"The snow!" he muttered; "the snow! How cold it is, how cold!"

He was silent for a moment, his mouth open, his eyes staring as if in horror.

"Farewell, old wolf!" he cried suddenly, in fiercest scorn; "the wolves will spare the wolf!" And he laughed—laughed horribly.

"Help, help!" cried Marfa, half fainting, and we sprang towards Lucien. But already, as on the preceding night, a reaction had set in, and he was weeping silently as he lay inert upon the terrace. Then he sighed deeply and the crisis passed. He looked about him, recognised us, and asked in a tone of profound surprise: "Why, what is the matter, gentlemen; what is the meaning of these frightened faces?"

"Come, children," said M. Grand-Jacquot, whose face had become livid, "you must retire now, you have much to go through to-morrow," and he hurried them into the château.

Anton Mikhail had long before disappeared.

"That was a very strange scene," commented Bardene, when we were alone; "by-the-way, you are a Russian scholar—could you make out what it was all about?"

"Oh, yes," I replied; "they talked a common Russian," and I repeated to him what they had said.

"Strange, very strange," he murmured.

"No," said I; "there is nothing remarkable about it. The Princess as a serf belonged to the sect of which Anton Mikhail is a priest—the Filipovtz; fanatics, who hope by their own sufferings to redeem mankind; voluntary expiators of the crimes of the world, Disciples of the Bleeding Lamb, who kill themselves that others may be immortal. That explains it all—the reproaches of the 'man of God,' who saw her slipping from the faith, and the perplexities of the Princess, struggling between her love and her conscience."

Bardene chatted about it a few moments longer, and presently he retired. At last I was free to make a search for the palimpsest.

All was silent as I entered the library. Lighting one of the candles, I proceeded to look about me. At the extremity of the hall stood Anton Mikhail's little altar decked with flowers. Raising my eyes, I shuddered as I beheld the great Volkine wolf, its sparkling eyes gleaming down upon me. I was about to begin my search among the manuscripts, when a sudden noise startled me. It was as if a key had been inserted in the door giving upon the terrace. I stood quite still, and held my breath. Yes, the door began slowly to open. I snuffed my candle, and fled to the darkest corner of the room.

"You dare threaten me!" cried Lucien.

A hand now appeared, and slowly drew aside the *portière*, disclosing the pale face of Lucien de Hurecourt. His eyes did not change their direction once—they stared at me. I saw that I was discovered, and managed to muster up courage to come forward.

"Sir," I said hesitatingly, "it is true you find me here after midnight in an apparently compromising position; but——"

I did not complete my sentence. He did not hear me, he did not see me. He walked slowly forward with an automatic step—he was walking in his sleep. In his hand he held an object which he pressed to his breast. It was a manuscript—my palimpsest! Arrived at the table, Lucien laid down his manuscript, opened it, and gazed at it for some moments. Then he lit a candle, sat down, took up the steel eraser from the inkstand, and began to scratch the parchment.

I had now regained my self-possession, and stepping lightly forward, I looked over his shoulder, and examined the manuscript. It was indeed the palimpsest, the Carolingian, the psalter of the offices for the dead. "*De profundis clamavi ad te*," the first line of the open page read—"from the depths have I cried unto thee." It was scraped through in places, and was sadly mutilated, but here and there I could read words, phrases, sentences, in Greek text of the best epoch. But, alas! a great blank space had been erased upon more than half of the page, and at this Lucien was scratching industriously. Drawing out

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paper and pencil, I transcribed what was legible, translating as I wrote:

.....Lucius.....
.....Oh, Lucius.....
.....you, Lucius in.....
.....to secure yourself an adulterous love and to steal a vast heritage.....
.....By the religion of the gods, in the name of the human conscience, in the name of public piety, punish an abominable crime.....
.....the soul of the dead has for a moment been freed from hell...
.....have pity, have pity; by the stars of heaven, by the divinities of death, by the elements of nature, by the silence of night, give me back my life for but an instant.....vengeance, the sole consolation of the dead.....

(Here occurred the blank space; further down other phrases followed:)

..... and the body rises, it speaks; it weeps, alas!.....
.....you shall confess, you shall tell all, you shall tell to all the secret of the dead.....the sin that has robbed me of my bleeding couch.....

Here came the bottom of the page. The continuation of this strange scene of necromancy should follow. I tried to turn the page gently, but could not. Lucien was leaning heavily on it, and still scraped away.

Now he stopped, and sighing deeply, arose and started slowly towards the door. Now was my chance if I ever hoped to get the precious manuscript.

I put forth my hand to draw it gently from him, but I had no sooner touched it than he screamed, as if in mortal fear, and struck me a terrific blow on the chest.

It sent me sprawling on the floor, and when I got on my feet again, Lucien had disappeared through the door.

The next morning I was rather late in getting down. I had taken my coffee in my room, and found the wedding-party already assembled. Judge Bardene and a young doctor were to act as Lucien's witnesses, and two lawyers were to perform the same kindly office for the Princess. But as one of the latter had sent word that it was absolutely impossible for him to be present, I was asked to take his place, and willingly consented.

Lucien seemed to know nothing of the preceding night's performance in the library, and seemed the happiest of men.

"Come," said M. Grand-Jacquot, after a few moments, "we must repair to the mayor's office to have the civil marriage performed. M. Chéraval, as the Princess's senior witness, will you offer her your arm?"

"Excuse me," said Lucien, stopping me, politely enough, as I offered my arm, "the Princess will take my arm;" and as she seemed to hesitate: "Marfa, I beg of you, take my arm."

She obeyed, pleased, and blushed charmingly.

"Children, children!" cried the scandalised parent, "I am astonished——"

"I wish it," said Lucien shortly, looking his father in the eye, and the party proceeded to the great door. Suddenly Lucien turned and led the Princess towards the library.

"Come, none of this pleasantry, my son," said M. Grand-Jacquot; "the mayor has been waiting an hour."

Again the son turned upon him and said imperiously:

"I wish it."

In the library a strange spectacle awaited us. The walls were adorned with green branches, and the little

Struck me a fearful blow on the chest.

altar, erected by Anton Mikhail, was decked with flowers. On the altar, amid roses, lilies, heliotrope, and pansies, was a wooden chalice, a clumsy production of Byzantine art. The "man of God," still in his robe of soiled cotton, stood upon the lower step of the altar, awaiting our approach. Lucien led the bride towards the altar, while we filed in behind them.

"How kind you are, Lucien," said Marfa, in a moved tone; "I am very grateful to you. But, truly, we must put off the religous ceremony until later. Let us go first to the mayor's."

"I wish it," said Lucien de Hurecourt for the third time.

"Darling, I beg of you——" began the Princess, joining her hands in supplication.

"Obey, Marfa!" cried the stern voice of Anton Mikhail; "the dead commands. For you the hour of pardon has come."

He had expressed himself in French, rough and incorrect, but intelligible to all. A livid pallor overspread the Princess's features, and she bowed her head without a word.

"Ah, judge," said Lucien, turning with a mirthless laugh to Bardene, "how coarse and superstitious are these Slavs. I know them well—I have lived in Kherson, where I was consul of France. It was a melancholy post, that city of Potemkin, with its steppes—its eternal steppes on all sides. But let us sit down—I have much to say," and pushing forward a chair for Bardene, they sat down while we grouped ourselves about them. Princess Volkine, her head bowed, seemed to hear nothing, to see nothing, to be stolidly resigned—but to what? As to the "man of God," he stood motionless as a statue, his blazing eyes fixed upon Lucien.

"Proceed, sir," said the judge; "I am listening."

"Yes, Kherson is a sad place," resumed Lucien, "with no distractions—little society, no balls, no concerts; the only solaces are to be found in cigars, cards, and brandy. Outside the city all is desolation—boundless levels of barren plain, inhabited only by wolves—packs of fierce, gaunt wolves. It was neither

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duty nor the attractions of the city that kept me there, it was an affair of gallantry. Thirty versts north of the city rose the towers of the Castle of Kara-Issar, where for a few months each year lived the Prince Volkine.

"A strange person was this Prince Volkine, with his bald head, his black eyes under their shaggy brows, his Kalmuck nose, and his long, white beard; grand in his manners and imbued with an inordinate pride of race. He had two passions; he strove madly for universal knowledge, and to that end studied all the sciences and spent his nights over musty parchment and mouldy manuscripts; and he conspired—yes, this Prince Volkine, whose forefathers had not deemed a Romanoff worthy to unloose their shoes, had become a democrat, a conspirator, had even married the daughter of a serf. Out of respect for his ancient name, and, perhaps, for his age, the government did not interfere with him, but it watched him; and he abused its indulgences, unhappy man.

"I was very assiduous in my calls at Kara-Issar, not to listen to the old man's maunderings, but to see his wife, the Princess Marfa. We loved each other, she and I, and she——"

A heartrending cry of grief and indignation burst from the Princess's lips, and she sank on her knees before the altar.

"Let her suffer!" said Anton Mikhail imperiously, as I started to aid her.

"Lucien, Lucien, my child," cried M. Grand-Jacquot, "you are ill. You must go up to your room——"

"Silence, M. Grand-Jacquot!" said Judge Bardeno sternly; "as an officer of the law, I command you not to interrupt this statement. Proceed, sir," he said to the Vicomte.

Then began before us a terrible scene. Lucien, impelled by an irresistible impulse, had risen, and now like an actor he played—he lived his part.

"It was very monotonous when I returned to Kherson," Lucien went on; "I was reprimanded for my absence by the minister, little work had accumulated, and there was nothing to do—oh, Marfa, Marfa, if she were with me! Meanwhile, let me work. To-morrow evening there will be a ball given by the new governor—someone knocks at my door. 'Come in.' Ah, a soldier, with a note—two lines hastily traced:

"The police will attempt the arrest of your friend, Prince Volkine, at his Château to-night. Save him. You are commanded to do so.

"'Who brought this?' The man was gone, there was no signature. 'Save him'—I shall not go. May a thousand devils take him! 'You are commanded'—I commanded! By whom? A pack of scoundrels—and then, is he not Marfa's husband?

"'Prepare the drosky, Tegor, and put in the two best horses. No, you need not come—I shall drive myself. What do you say? Yes, there is plenty of snow. And—what? Oh, wolves, I am not afraid of wolves. Good, give me the reins—I shall not be back until the morning.'

"How long and sinister the road is! Last year, when Marfa was at Kara-Issar, I used to drive over twice a week, and it seemed delightful. Dear Marfa, why did he send her to Switzerland? Can he suspect? To-night the road seems horrible. Ah, this Volkine.

"At last the castle. The court is deserted, no noise in the house. The door is half open—Volkine expects some one. Eleven o'clock; we can get back to Kherson before daybreak, but we must be quick. I spring up the stairs—I know the way so well—I push open the door, and find the old man working—always at the same manuscript. 'Lucien,' he cries, 'what brings you at such an hour?' I give him the note he reads it, then looks at me. 'Hasten, prince; I will conceal you at the consulate. To-morrow you can depart on a French vessel for France—you are saved.' No word of thanks; he slips on his wraps, takes the manuscript in his hand, and we start. I lash the horses, we fly over the snow—we two, alone, side by side, in the night.

"See! What are those two red points of flame, down there in the moonlight, that seem to gleam and change their position? The man is mad to put himself in my power thus. And I love Marfa, she belongs to me. If she should become a widow—but it is absurd, the police are on our track, they would find the body——

"The two red points of flame have come nearer—there are four of them, six, ten—and black forms begin to appear against the snow. They are wolves! they have scented us. Our horses plunge forward.

"'You are armed?' asks Prince Volkine. 'Yes, I have my revolver.' Why does Marfa's husband remind me of it? He is looking at me—this old man drives me mad. 'What are you thinking of, Lucien?' he asks suddenly, with a strange laugh: 'I will wager I could say. You are telling yourself that if your companion should die you could marry his widow. You are wrong, my poor friend; you will never marry Marfa!' I suppress an angry and threatening gesture—he knows all! How has he been able to read my thoughts? Now I remember something Marfa once told me, that Prince Volkine pretends to exercise a mysterious power over me. Yes, that is it. He knows all, he will separate me from Marfa—kill her perhaps.

"The wolves surround us. They gallop beside the drosky. They are ahead of the horses and snap at their muzzles. We are lost! if we could throw something to them they would stop—it would be deliverance. A wolf leaps at the off horse and seizes him by the nostrils. I rise in my seat and draw my revolver. 'Shoot!' cries Volkine. But I do not shoot, and, turning to him, I say: 'Since you are of the race of wolves, why are you afraid?' He drops the reins, and stands up facing me.

"We threaten each other, face to face; we defy each other; we challenge each other with our eyes, without a word; his eyes seem to burn into my soul. Enough of this torture! I raise my pistol and fire upon him. He cries out, he sways, he falls against me. With his two hands he seizes me—one upon my forehead, the other gripping my throat. Still those eyes—those terrible eyes! He leans towards me, whispers in my ear, his hot breath upon my cheek: 'You shall never marry Marfa. On your wedding day you will tell the whole story to the officers of the law.'

"With a desperate effort I push him from me, I throw him into the snow. Then, laughing in my turn, I lean back and cry after him: 'Farewell, old wolf. The wolves will spare the wolf!' the motto of his family.

"Already I am far away. Through all the night I hear his desperate cries, half drowned in the snarling of the wolves. At last it is day. The city—the streets are still deserted. I reach my house, and in my room fall asleep in a chair. My servant awakens me. 'You have forgotten something, sir, in the waggon,' and he hands me a manuscript, the one the Prince carried. But the wolves alone know my secret. Ah, Marfa, you are mine henceforth, mine for ever!"

The crisis had passed, and after it came the tears,

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unconsciousness, and surprise of the two evenings before.

At this moment Marfa arose. The pallor of agony was on her face; but her eyes gleamed with joy, shone with happiness. Slowly she approached Lucien and knelt before him.

"Was it for love of me," she asked, "that you dared to kill? And for love of me you will die?"

"I loved you," murmured Lucien; "and you—do you love me still?"

For answer she seized his hand and covered it with passionate kisses—this hand that had done murder for her.

"Do they know—all?" asked Lucien in a low tone.

"All; they know that you have made me free. Now, let us go—let us go away together," and she rose as if to lead him out into the park.

Suddenly Anton Mikhail, till then motionless and mute, strode forward, and with extended arms barred their way.

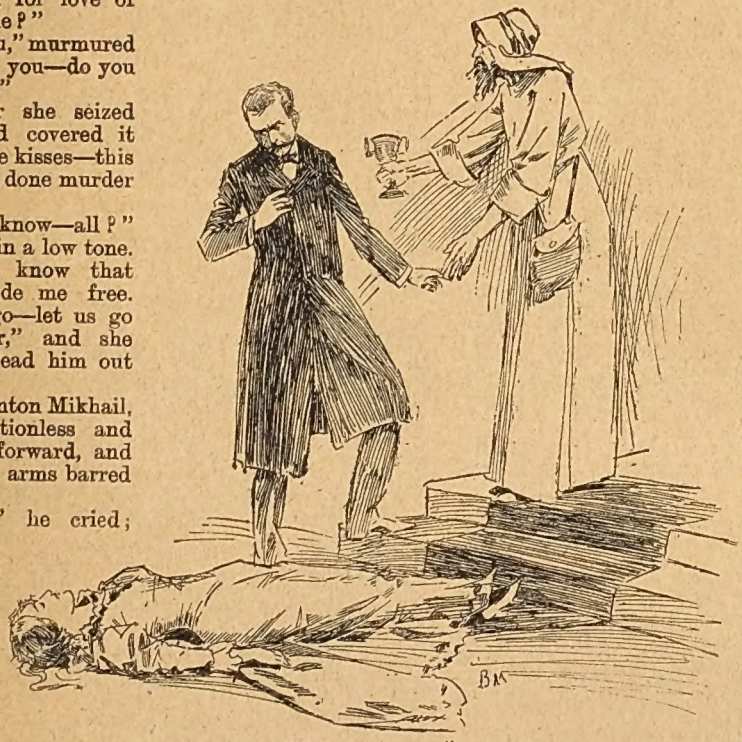
"Cowards!" he cried; "you shall not go! God has led you to pardon; you must bow to it!"

Marfa drew back into the room, her lover following her.

"Marfa," pursued the fanatic, "the hour of expiation has sounded, and you know well how God exacts expiation. He Himself taught us, in Himself wishing for death. Death—propitiatory death—will wash away all guilt, cleanse of all sin; it is the baptism of life, it is the Great Pardon. But the law of the Bleeding Lamb is inexorable.

"Voluntary murder is only atoned by self-immolation, the blood of others can only be washed away in our own." He was silent, at once ferocious and suppliant. Marfa said not a word, but softly took Lucien's hand in hers, and together they drew near the altar.

"My daughter—my dear daughter," said the priest, taking his place at the altar, "here, in this chalice, is Paradise for both of you."



"She awaits you."

"Paradise, father—the Paradise of which you have told me so often, the Paradise of eternal love?"

For all response, Anton Mikhail took the wooden chalice and held it towards the couple.

Lucien opened his arms; the young woman threw herself into them, and lip to lip, clasped in each other's arms, they stood thus, in silence for a moment.

"Father," said Marfa, at last, "in the eternity to which you would send us will my beloved never be separated from me?"

"No, dear child. God is called Justice, but he is also called Love. Trust in Him. Your marriage in death will be for all time."

Tearing herself from the loves of earth, Marfa stretched forth her hand for the chalice that held eternal love.

"Give it me quickly, father," she cried; "I shall leave a share for you, Lucien," and she drank the deadly draught. She gave the chalice back into the priest's hand, swayed for a moment and fell on her face upon the floor.

"Saved!" cried Mikhail, and he offered the poison to Lucien, saying: "She awaits you."

Lucien hesitated for a moment; then, closing his eyes, he drained the cup, and in his turn fell dead beside the woman he had loved.

James Rockell.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 10.

Curiously enough, the first correct card to hand this week comes from Cardiff. All the competitors, London and provincial, whose attempts arrived before that sent by Mr. J. Burke, 3 Burgh Street, Riverside, Cardiff, gave the word "house" (p. 290, c. 1, line 21), of which two-fifths of the letters were turned; or "man" (p. 316, c. 1, line 38), of which the "m" alone was turned. The correct word is "stood" (p. 290, c. 2, line 67). The "inner radius" guinea goes to Mr. A. J. Stevens, P.O., H.M.S. *Repulse*, Chatham.

POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 12.

If A=17, E=19, I=20, O=25, and U=3, what word on this page is of the greatest numerical value. Give the word and its total value in plain characters on the back of a post-card, together with your name and address. A guinea goes to the reader who first points this out, and another to the reader living more than a hundred miles from London. *Post-cards only, please*—other forms of communication disqualified.

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THE WHITE ELEPHANT.

"SHE's a-goin' fast," murmured the Widow Mudge as she bent over John Holcomb's wife and noted the laboured breathing and ashen look of the sick woman.

"Ye don't mean it, do ye, Betsy?" said Mrs. Pringle, who was assisting the widow in the care of the invalid. "She's been a-goin' so many years I don't much believe her time's come now."

"I tell ye, Cinthy," retorted the widow with a grim satisfaction, "I tell ye that airs death." And she added hastily: "I think mebbe we'd orter call John."

"Well, I should think we had orter," replied Mrs. Pringle. "A man wants to know when his own wife's a-passin' away."

So she hurried through the low-ceilinged, whitewashed kitchen, in which lingered the subtle aroma of boiled beef and cabbage, and through the woodshed to the back porch, where John Holcomb sat engaged in mending a rake and talking to another man sitting in a light spring waggon drawn up before the door.

"John," said Mrs. Pringle, touching him on the shoulder, "I do believe Martha's hour has come. The widder thinks so, too. Ye'd better come in and pray, hadn't ye?"

John rose, and, drawing a face befitting the occasion, said to the man in the waggon: "Joel, I wisht ye'd hold on a minute; if Martha's really so bad as they say, I'd better send to town by ye fer to get her coffin. I shan't have no chance to go myself, an' you kin git it jest as well as me."

"All right," replied Joel Purdy; "I'll set here till ye come back an' tell me how she is."

John Holcomb, who was a thin man with a sandy beard and meek grey eyes, disappeared within the woodshed, followed by Mrs. Pringle's fluttering cap strings. He was absent only a moment or two, when he returned with pale, solemn-visage and perturbed air.

"Yes, she's a-goin' sure," he half whispered, "I'll resk gittin' it. Martha's five foot two, an' thinner'n a poker, so ye won't have no trouble findin' one ready made. They come a mite cheaper, I fancy. I wisht ye'd call at Parmlee's, too, an' ask him to come out, so's I can arrange bout the buryin'. Ye might's well tell folks we'll probably have the funeral day after to-morrow."

Having received his melancholy commissions, Joel drove away, while John returned to engage in prayer at the bedside of his dying spouse.

Mrs. Martha Holcomb had been dying for years: time and again had she announced that she could not survive the day. Over and over had she taken to her bed for the last time. Whenever her children or grandchildren departed after paying her a visit, she called them to her and, after bidding them a solemn and final farewell, adjured them to meet her "beyond Jordan, where the wicked cease from troubling." It was one of Mrs. Holcomb's fond delusions that the wicked had set snares for her feet all her life; that they were determined to make her stumble and fall into the pit. She yearned to be set free from these abominations, and really tried her best to die. But the wiry little woman had strong vitality, and as, after all, there was really nothing the matter with her, save slight attacks of what her neighbour, Mrs. Pringle, called "magrums," she had held out to a reasonable age.

But this last attack, whatever its nature, had assumed quite a serious turn, and even her husband, who had been known to speak rather slightingly of "Ma's conniption fits," was now thoroughly alarmed and convinced that he was about to lose his life partner. Accordingly, with the thrift begotten of his daily experience, he determined to secure a bargain in coffins and have it on hand when the fatal moment should arrive.

Mrs. Holcomb lay in a stupor all day, never rousing until sunset, just at the moment that Joel Purdy drove into the yard with his long, ghastly freight. John Holcomb was standing in the porch as Joel reined up his horses.

Together the two men lifted out the coffin and bore it tenderly into the kitchen, where they deposited it on a couple of chairs, and, drawing back, regarded it with the gaze of connoisseurs.

"It looks fust-rate," was John's comment; "good strong one, hain't it, Joel?"

"'Twas the best Ben Cook had in stock," replied Joel, his head on one side, as he eyed his purchase critically, "an' bein' ready made, he'll let you have it dirt cheap, he said."

"Well, I'm obleeged to you, Joel," said John, as he followed his neighbour to the kitchen door, "an' mebbe you'll ask your wife to come over this evenin' an' help lay Martha out. Mrs. Pringle an' the widder air clean beat out a-nussin' of her."

"Why, yes, John, certainly I will. I know Mrs. Purdy'd jest soon come as not." And vouchsafing this encouraging statement, Joel turned his horses and drove homeward.

As John stepped back into the kitchen, the stillness of the house suddenly smote him. The widow Mudge, wearied out, had gone home for a nap. Mrs. Pringle was in the pantry cutting up the cold ham for supper. John felt calm and peaceful, and resigned to the trial he was about to undergo.

Suddenly he heard a voice, sharp, irritable, querulous:

"John!"

The sparse hairs on John's bald head stood up. A trembling seized his limbs. His face grew pale. He gasped.

"John!" called the voice again.

At this, Mrs. Pringle emerged from the pantry, a slice of ham dangling from the fork in one uplifted hand, the knife in the other. Her eyes were fairly popping from her head.

"Why, John," she panted, "that's Mrs. Holcomb's voice. She's a-callin' ye. She——"

"I know it," cried John, in a terrible tone, "she's a-callin' me. She hain't dyin' after all, ye see, an' jest look at that there coffin settin' right there. Will ye, for the love of Heaven, hide it somewheres afore she gits up an' sees it?" And, clutching his hair in impotent despair, he went into his wife's room.

Mrs. Pringle was a woman of action. She was as strong as a man, and alert as a cat. Realising John Holcomb's awful predicament, she rose at once to the situation. Dropping knife, fork and ham, with one supreme effort, she pounced upon the coffin, lifted it and vanished.

When, ten minutes later, she reappeared, flushed and guilty, she saw an apparition wrapped in a patchwork

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bed-quilt before the kitchen fire. It was the sick woman, who an hour before was believed to be *in extremis*. There she sat, comfortably ensconced in an easy-chair, toasting her feet at the oven, and smiling feebly as she sipped a cup of tea handed her by the trembling hands of John.

"Why, Mrs. Holcomb," said John's fellow conspirator, "how careless of ye. Ye've been dreadful ill. Ye hadn't orter got up so sudden, had ye?"

"I couldn't stand that air bed another minute," declared the invalid. "It was as hard as a marble tombstun."

John gave such a start that the spoon beat a little tattoo on the saucer, as he passed a fresh cup of tea to his spouse. Mrs. Pringle looked demurely down, and smoothed out the creases in her gingham apron.

"I really thought the hour of my departure had come," went on Mrs. Holcomb, smacking her lips over her tea.

"So did some other folk," thought Mrs. Pringle, stealing a sly glance at John. The unfortunate man was truly a pitiable object. His brow was covered with perspiration, and he shook as if seized with an ague.

"But my strength is renewed," continued Martha, "and though yet very feeble, I feel that a time, times and half-times, are still mine. But I need some nourishment dretfully. Mrs. Pringle, I do believe I could relish one of them slices of ham."

Mrs. Pringle smiled as she went back to the pantry. "I'll bet anything," she said to herself, as she fell to slicing a loaf of bread, "that she heerd me cutting that ham and that's what fetched her out of that bed. She does love good vittles, though she don't know nothin' 'bout preparin' on 'em. But that air coffin! If it don't beat anything. What in the name of the old cat will he do with it? I fancy he's got a white elephant on his hands."

There was a movement behind her. She turned quickly to meet John's pallid face, glassy eyes and parched lips.

Lifting his voice so that his wife could hear him in the kitchen, he said: "Jest reach me a jug, will ye, Mrs. Pringle? I'm a-goin' down to the cellar fer ter git some cider fer my poor, dear, sufferin' wife." Then in a low, hurried whisper: "What have you done with it?"

"It?" asked Mrs. Pringle, with a puzzled air. Though she perfectly understood his question, she enjoyed his alarm and confusion.

"Yes, that air jug'll do fust-rate," said John in strident tones to gain time. Then lower: "Yes—it—it—that air blamed—old—coffin?"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Pringle, "oh, you mean that. It's safe."

"Where? Where?" persisted John.

"In the loft over the hog-pen," whispered his tormenter as she handed down the jug.

* * * * *

Mrs. Holcomb continued to improve rapidly, and in a week or so was able to attend to her household duties. John, however, was on the verge of nervous prostration. At any moment some officious and meddlesome person might tell his wife of his premature bargain. He knew the temper of his consort, and that if she were to discover he had been so ready to assist her departure from this world, he would know no peace from her waspish tongue. He could depend upon the village cabinet-maker, who had supplied the coffin; upon Joel Purdy and Mrs. Pringle, for these he had sworn to secrecy; but at least a dozen other people had seen Joel driving along with his gruesome burden, and had received the information that it was intended for John Holcomb's wife. The sword was suspended over his head. At any moment it might fall.

He grew nervous and fidgety, starting like a guilty thing whenever his wife addressed him. He paid stolen visits to the loft, and regarded his bargain with looks as black as its sable cover. At times he was tempted to destroy it; and reckless visions of the glorious bonfire it would make darted through his brain. But John Holcomb was a penurious man. He could not bear to waste anything—even a coffin. There was ever the possibility that his wife might——

John always turned away from these meditations in a state of mingled hope and fear.

One morning Joel drove up to the door and called to John to ask if he had heard the news:

"What news?"

"Old Si Hawkins can't live till night, they say. He's jest a-gaspin' like a fish," returned Joel.

John was seized with an inspiration. "Joel," he hoarsely whispered, "ef you're a-goin' 'long by there, I'll jest jine ye."

"Well, git in—git in," said Joel cheerfully, "I'll be glad of your company."

"Joel," said John, when they had jogged along a few minutes, "do ye know why I'm a-goin' over to Si Hawkins'?"

"Why, I suppose fer to neighbour with his folks in the hour of sorrow."

"Well, of course," said John, "that is my principal reason fer a-goin'; but, Joel, I think mebbe I can drive a trade an' git thet air coffin off my hands. I tell you, Joel, thet thing'll drive me clean crazy if I don't git rid on it. Now, if Si was willin' ter swap a calf——"

"How can he when he's a-dyin'?" demanded Joel.

"Well, I mean his folks, of course. I'd take a calf or barn-yard tools—Joel, I'd take almost anything fer that coffin," concluded poor John.

"Yes," said Joel musingly, "I understand how ye feel 'bout it, John. If I was in your shoes, an' had a wife with Mrs. Holcomb's temper, I shouldn't want no coffins about. But s'pose Si's folks say they'll take it, how are ye a-goin' to manage to git the thing away without Mrs. Holcomb a-seein' of it?"

"I dunno," said John despondently, "I hain't thought so fer as thet."

"Ye might git 'em to cart it away at night after she's gone to bed," suggested Joel.

"Thet's so," cried John eagerly, "you're a fust-rate one to plan, Joel. I do hope that Si's folks will agree to take it. You see, Joel," argumentatively, "they've got to have one. Thet stands to reason. Well, they might jest as well take mine as git one from town. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Joel, "seems as if it would be a foolish waste of time and labour to haul up a coffin from town, when there's one handy in the neighbourhood. I'll tell ye what I'll do, John, to help ye out. If they take your coffin, I'll come over to-night an' git it and take it down there, after you and Mrs. Holcomb are fast asleep," and he nudged John playfully.

"Joel," said John, grasping his hand, "you're a friend in need. Help me to git thet air coffin off my premises an' anything I can do for you, jest call on me."

By this time they had reached the Hawkins' farmhouse,

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and John, descending from the waggon, tiptoed softly up the front steps and knocked—a gentle, deprecating knock, befitting the solemnity of the moment. He was admitted by one of the daughters of the house, and invited to be seated.

"How's your pa?" he asked nervously.

"He's very low. Can't last till night, the doctor says."

"Can I see your ma?" was the next timid question.

"Yes," said Matilda Hawkins, manifesting no special surprise at the request; and going to the adjoining bedroom, spoke to her mother, who presently appeared.

She was a gaunt woman with large features and firm mouth. She shook hands with her neighbour and sat down.

"I jest heerd this mornin' how bad off Si was," said John, "an' I hurried over to see ef there's anything I can do."

"No, thank you," returned Mrs. Hawkins, "there hain't nothin' nobody can do. He's jest alive an' that's all. How's Mrs. Holcomb?"

"She's pretty well," said John nervously.

"Well, it was amazin' how she got over thet last attack of hern," observed Mrs. Hawkins. "I never was so beat over nothin'."

"Nor I," said John earnestly.

"I should be jest as much surprised to see Si Hawkins come a-walkin' out of that air bedroom," said the lady. "You'd given her up, hadn't ye?"

"Yes," said John, "I had even made all calculations for the buryin', got the coffin an' all."

"Why, so I heerd," said Mrs. Hawkins. "Astonishin'!"

"I didn't know," stammered John, "but what if you hadn't spoke fer one—thet bein' as how you'd have to have one—I might sell you mine, or swap it—or—or—somethin'," he finished helplessly.

"Buy what?" inquired Mrs. Hawkins.

"Why—my—thet is—Mrs. Holcomb's coffin."

"Do ye want to sell it?"

"Do I?" shouted John. Then, lowering his voice, he added: "Excuse me, Mrs. Hawkins, fer hollerin' so loud, but if you could know how I've suffered from thet air coffin, you'd feel fer me. Do take it! If Mrs. Holcomb was ever to find it, I dunno as she'd live with me a day—no—nor an hour."

"How big is it?" asked the prudent widow-elect.

"It's a good size," replied John, trembling with joy at the encouraging tone of her voice, "Martha's five foot two, an' it's plenty long fer her."

"Thet would do fer Si," said Mrs. Hawkins thoughtfully. "He was always a small man, and, lawd! he's shrunk up to nothin' now. I s'pose you'll sell cheap?"

"Yes, you can have it cheap. I'll knock off ten shillings, or if you'd ruther, you can swap somethin' fer it."

"Well," said Mrs. Hawkins, who was keener at a bargain than even John himself, "I'll swap ye a plough fer it."

"Don't need no plough," hesitated John.

"Well," said his neighbour, "from all I can hear, you need one as much as you do a coffin. Thet's all I'll do. The plough's out there in front of the barn. You can look at it, and ef you want to swap fer thet, I'll take the coffin an' agree to keep my mouth shet."

John expostulated, but in vain. He had met his match. He went out and examined the plough. It was a crazy old affair, and would need considerable patching before it would be of any use, but he decided to accept the proposition. "Mrs. Hawkins'd skin the hide off ye," he confided to Joel, "but I've got to do it. I don't see noo other way out of the mess."

So the bargain was struck. Joel was to deliver the coffin at ten o'clock that night, while John was to come after the plough at his convenience.

* * * * *

"John," said Mrs. Holcomb, with a sharp poke, "wake up. There's someone about. I believe they're down at the hencoop."

John started up and listened. He distinctly heard the door of the hogpen open. Joel was about it.

"Bosh," he hastily remarked, "there hain't no noise. You're always a-hearin' of somethin'. Lie down, Martha, an' go to sleep, or you'll be havin' one of your worst spells."

"Never mind," replied his consort, as she put on her dress, "there's something wrong out there, an' I mean to see what it is."

John was driven to extremity. Through the soft summer night he could hear Joel dragging something heavy down the stairs from the loft. He heard the horses stamp, and Joel softly say: "Whoa!" once or twice. What should he do? If his wife insisted on going out, she would discover his awful secret. In some way he must distract her attention until Joel should get safely away with the coffin.

He hesitated one instant, then with a yell which would have terrified a band of Apaches, he seized the water jug from the washstand, and deliberately flung himself over the large rocking-chair at the foot of the bed.

The yell, the crash of breaking china, the deluge of water, and the fear that her husband had gone suddenly insane, was too much for Mrs. Holcomb. She fainted upon the bed, while John, drenched, cut, bleeding, but triumphant, rose from the *débris* as Joel drove quietly past the bedroom window. He was saved!

* * * * *

It was the evening after the funeral services of Silas Hawkins. John Holcomb and his wife sat at their supper-table. The lady was reviewing the event of the day.

"It was as pleasant a funeral as I ever see," she observed. "The minister's remarks was very satisfying."

"Yes, that's so," assented her husband.

"The singin' was good, and the flowers was nice. I thought Mrs. Hawkins had orter had a new bunnit, but she's near, so near, I s'pose she wouldn't spend the money."

"I never see no closer woman," agreed John, with a sigh, as he thought of the rickety old plough.

"But what struck me," said Mrs. Holcomb, reaching for the cold corned beef, "was the coffin."

John shivered.

"It was a fine one," went on his wife. "I was surprised ter see so good a coffin. I wonder where she got it. Did Ben Cook git thet up, John?"

"I don't know—I s'pose—how do I know?" fell in jerks from John's blue lips.

"Well," said his wife composedly, "I never see a coffin I was so taken with. When the hour of my departure comes, John—an' it's liable, you know, to come at any minute—I'd like to have you git a coffin for me as near like thet as you can, for I never see no nicer pattern of a coffin."

Poor John could not speak.

E. S. Tupper.

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JUMBLE STORY No. 12.

TED CAPEC.

See Page 384.

He had gone into a shop to buy her some roses, and borrowed. It was only a small sum, for the paint. His bride of less than a year made him the chance of life; a week, even longer perhaps—but lips he pressed so tenderly heeded not his passionate hæmorrhage and actual disease."

"How she would have rejoiced over my first child thrown out of harm's way; the fragile rescuer should come now."

With hair half unbound she stood, a dark, proud most perfect Hero that ever watched for Leander.

He was not allowed to go to his wife yet; for Parker does not do things by halves.

So Foster did what he had sworn he would never he kissed the death damp from her brow.

The Artist put the girl into position again and left his wife's bedside. At the end came the return and an almost too ethereal beauty in her eyes.

"I shall be here again later, but I am afraid there would not have lent him anything. But it saw enough. He realised everything.

There were many men besides Jack Foster stays away. When I no longer need or welcome God, it is too hard; I cannot bear it."

* * * * *

"In this world," muttered Foster to himself the varnishing ticket; and the irony of it that it thought she was by his side. Then he saw a run- at each visit was more importunate that his patient relaxing—most important if organic mischief were but still a child; while half-way across the year; maybe there were many better pictures than Evelyn.

"Accepted!" he cried; then his agony was sharp after all," he murmured.

He opened the envelope carelessly and drew back unopened, and then Foster went to a friend after all, you see," she whispered, and the smile on her husband's anxious look.

"Sometimes Fate's little jokes are not so unkind the girl went on:

Before he could move the tragedy was over—the goddess, watching, with an unfathomable look of her face deepened into absolute radiant content; and her old buoyancy return, and the far away surgeon rubbed his glasses and continued:

"Sweetheart, you are not so well to-day," he said and until a shrill cry made him look round he half crushed a letter that he held unopened in his hand right? I am afraid I turned my head."

The picture was finished and sent in before she were taken all might be well, and he watched for while he waited a maid brought in a letter. He for the first time noticed how fragile she had grown, he stared at it:

The days passed slowly and Jack Foster scarcely watched the colour come back to Evelyn's cheeks, directly in its way a tiny child—dirty and unkempt, and at first Jack Foster did not realise that the fate of our picture," she said afterwards, in reply to see a doctor."

An hour later the doctors had completed their hand.

"I am so glad, darling. I did bring you luck of consciousness, and she smiled faintly at him as Foster could never quite transfer to canvas.

"Nothing to be done." Jack Foster sat motion- senseless on the ground.

"This feverishness is only anxiety to know the man was poor—probably if he had been rich he should go to a dryer climate. "London was too cold, and if he were to forbid my posing! What doctor. Go on painting, I am quite rested. Is my name and lead to endless commissions and bring kisses.

"It has been taken, little one." His voice was to be prevented. Delay now might result in examination and given their verdict: "No possible road, with arms outstretched to save it, was his, but no one had a more beautiful woman to House, but Dr. Clayton came again and again, and much depended on money now. The letter came tenderly, a few days before his picture was finished, do; he wrote to Evelyn's father and told him how as he stopped suddenly in his work. "You must opened it mechanically, and read without under- standing it, but the contents grew clear to him as keenly anxious to have their pictures taken that look died out of her eyes. Now if only his picture find they have not space to hang it."

"Your picture, Jack?" she breathed.

"Then if it's accepted that means it is sold as husky, but well under control.

"Yes, darling, if they take it it means Davos gaily.

"Not, yet Jack," she pleaded. "It is only a little Platz for you and commissions innumerable for me; that is all."

The man crossed over and kissed her softly, and send for his picture "as the Committee regret to her she comes." In the bitterness of his soul he consented to see a doctor. And when he shook his head and talked gravely of Davos Platz she laughed longing in her glorious eyes, that try as he would and unjust. When success means everything she well. Oh, Jack, if they only take it."

The days passed with no news from Burlington away horse dashing madly down the street, and less.

"Sir James Parker saw it one day and offered you ever so much money, isn't it?"

"When you have sent it in, dear, then I will se a the posts eagerly.

Foster took the news as one stunned. The day after the funeral, "things are horribly unequal should we do then? This picture is to make your out not the ticket but a request that he would them safely settled at Davos Platz, and Jack me a hundred guineas for it if it is hung."

"To lose her on the point of winning all. Oh, is nothing to be done."

MR. C. Y. BANT

By George Manville Fenn.

CHAPTER XX.

A Terrible Complication.

"A lady, sir," said Rancer—"strange lady. Just come in a cab. Been in some accident."

"Why does she come to me? Send her to Mr. Gainsford. I'm not a surgeon."

"Said she had come from Lord Braetoun, sir. Would see you."

"Good Heavens, madam! You here?" cried Murray, as he saw the door move, and Lucy Lee stood before him, ghastly pale, her bonnet crushed and torn, and a long scratch across her face, which had bled slightly and been badly wiped.

"Yes. Come at once. He's dying. Pray, pray make haste!"

"Braetoun dying!"

The words went through Murray like a galvanic shock, and everything else was forgotten.

"What is it? You have been in an accident?"

"Yes, but come, pray come."

He did not hesitate. His thoughts were mingled, and for the moment he could think of nothing but obeying the summons.

The cab she had come in was waiting, and he followed her.

"Quick!" he said to the driver; "Chester Square."

"No, no; Brompton Square," cried Lucy wildly.

"But is he not at home?"

"Yes, I took him home, and there's a doctor with him; but he is so horribly hurt I felt that I must fetch you."

"You took him home," murmured Murray confusedly, and then to himself, as the light fully broke upon him. "Then she does not know!"

He was silent for a few moments, during which Lucy tried to speak to him, but broke down and covered her face with her hands, to burst into a hysterical fit of sobbing.

At last, though, she sat up and gazed piteously in his face.

"You saved him before; you will again?" she said.

"I will do all I can; but try and tell me what has happened."

He looked at her strangely, for her dishevelled aspect and the injury to her forehead suggested an encounter. He had read of such things. Was it possible that in a quarrel he had struck her, and in a mad fit of passion she had retaliated with some weapon?

"We were going—down to the races," she faltered, with a great effort—"Rod was driving four-in-hand—there was a waggon in the way—I hardly know—the next moment there was a horrible crash, and he was down among the horses' feet, and they were kicking him."

She shuddered and held her hands to her breast, as if to stay the tumultuous throbbing of her heart. Then, making an effort, she went on:

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"I just saw that, and then I seemed to go to sleep, and when I opened my eyes again I was lying in a room with poor Auntie, whose arm was broken, and dear Rod was in the next room with people trying to bring him to.

"But it was a long time before he opened his eyes, and then he didn't even know me. The doctor said one of the horses had kicked him in the head, and they wanted to take him to the hospital, but I—we brought him home. Pray, pray tell the cabman to drive faster."

Murray mechanically gave the message, and then reseated himself, with the new trouble making his head swim. Braetoun at this woman's house, perhaps seriously injured, and Olive in ignorance of her husband's state.

The cab drew up at the number in Brompton Square that Lucy gave; and as they entered the house she left Murray in the hall, ran up the stairs to the drawing-room, and entered, to find the surgeon who had been called in kneeling by a mattress on the floor.

"Oh, Rod, Rod," she moaned, and she was about to fling herself down beside him, when the surgeon sternly interposed.

"Hush!" he said. "Silence! Not a word, or I will not be answerable for the consequences."

"But I am his——"

Lucy stopped with her lips apart.

"Yes, so I conclude, madam; but I am doing everything possible for your husband. Come with me into another room. I must speak to you."

He sternly backed her on to the landing, and said quickly as he closed the door: "I must have perfect silence in the house—a trained nurse must be in attendance."

"Oh, please, please let me!" she pleaded wildly.

"Hush, madam. Calmness and decision are necessary. You are yourself suffering from shock, and totally unfit. I wanted to tell you, too, that the case is so grave that I wish for some able medical man to be called for consultation, and—— I beg your pardon, sir; this is private, if you please."

"No, no," whispered Lucy excitedly. "This is Doctor Murray. I have been to fetch him."

"Yes, and I am an old friend of Lord Braetoun."

"Indeed! I beg pardon. I am glad to meet you. I knew your name well. Will you kindly step in?"

Murray followed him into the drawing-room, and Lucy crouched down upon the floor with her throbbing head resting in her hands, and the consultation went on, a low murmur reaching her ears from time to time. While beyond the door Allan Murray found that Braetoun's position was grave enough; severe concussion of the brain and a rib broken, with possible laceration of a lung.

The consultation and examination were long, and the surgeon said at last:

"If he were some sturdy young fellow, full of life, I should

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have hope, but he seems to have been in very bad health, fragile in the extreme. You have perhaps attended him?"

"Many times," said Murray gravely, and he gave a brief history of the last attack.

The surgeon tightened his lips, shrugged his shoulders, and said quietly:

"Well, sir, we must do all that we can. Will you suggest anything you would wish?"

"I can suggest nothing," said Murray, as he stood looking down at the pale face and bandaged head before him, and he shuddered slightly as he thought of what must be done.

"His friends ought to be communicated with at once. Will you undertake the painful task of speaking to Lady Braetoun?"

"Of speaking to Lady Braetoun?" said Murray with a start, and then he paused. "I cannot—I dare not," he muttered, and the surgeon looked wonderingly at him.

"Shall I go?" said the surgeon. "I see it would be very painful to you as the lady's friend."

"Painful, indeed," said Murray at last. "Lady Braetoun is an old friend, sir, and a lady whom I deeply reverence. The shock of this horrible mishap will nearly kill her. Can you help me under the circumstances to keep the whole truth from her, and spare her an additional agony?"

"Would it be right, sir?" said the surgeon sternly. "You are a man of eminence in the profession; should we be justified, in the face of such severe injuries, in keeping back the truth?"

"Not of his accident," said Murray bitterly. "I must be more plain. At any cost I must get my poor friend home. Lady Braetoun must not know under what circumstances the accident occurred."

"The overturning of a brake—want of skill in driving. But you said home. Impossible. If this is not their home, they must make arrangements to stay. Surely, sir, a little further consideration will show you the danger of the step."

"Yes, I see it without further consideration," said Murray gravely; "he must not be moved, but the lady whom we have seen is not Lady Braetoun, sir."

"Ah—h—h!" said the surgeon softly, and he tightened his lips. "Yes, I see, I see. Poor lady! The old, old story. It would save her—but no, the symptoms are too grave; I dare not."

"Yes," said Murray, with a weary sigh, "you are right. The symptoms are too grave; we dare not."

He turned mutely to his colleague, who interpreted rightly his silent question.

"Yes," he said, "we cannot help ourselves. Lord Braetoun's relatives must be told at once."

Murray bowed his head, stepped back to the injured man, bent over him for a short space, and then rose to quit the room.

"I will send in his old nurse as soon as possible," he said firmly. "You will stay?"

"Oh, yes, he must not be left."

As Murray reached the landing Lucy started to his side.

"May I go in now?"

"No; it is impossible."

"Oh, don't say that," she cried in a passionate whisper. "I can't bear it. Pray, pray let me go. I'll nurse him; do anything. Don't, pray don't keep me away; it is too cruel."

"Heaven knows, my poor girl, that I do not want to be cruel to you, but I am forced to say that you must not go."

"Then he is worse? I was right. He is dying!"

"No; he is not dying. He is in a very dangerous condition, but there is always hope. Now for his sake be patient, and leave it to those who will do their best to save his life."

"Ah! You are going! No, no, don't, pray don't go. You must stay with him. He has often told me that no one but you could save him when he was ill."

"I am going to send in a nurse, and——"

"Yes. I know: to get a carriage to take him away. He shall not go. It would kill him. I would die first. I know: it's because he is here with me."

"I am not going to fetch a carriage to take him away," said Murray sternly, "for it would kill him to be moved."

"Ah!" ejaculated the girl.

"But I must let his friends know of his condition. I am obliged to tell you that."

"His friends?" she cried, looking at him wildly. "Yes," she added, with a curious smile, "you are going to tell his wife. Well, I am sorry for her, but why tell her? She wouldn't come near him now."

Murray made no reply to that, but said hastily:

"As soon as the nurse comes——"

"No, no; he shall have no nurse but me."

"He must have a properly trained nurse if his life is to be saved."

"Oh!" groaned Lucy, and her pallid face grew convulsed.

"If you have any proper feeling you will help the lady I send in to do her duty."

"Yes, yes, Doctor," she said, clasping her hands and looking up at him appealingly; "I will—I will do everything; I'll be her servant. I'll do everything you wish, and be so patient and humble. Yes, indeed, I will. Go quickly, please. Don't mind what I said, only pray don't be cruel to me, because—because—yes, that's right. Go now. I'll wait, and get anything the other doctor wants."

He hurried out, feeling that his task was becoming doubly hard, so hard that for the moment there was little room to think of self.

CHAPTER XXI.

Playing to Lose.

Murray went straight to the nurses' home, was fortunate in his search, dispatched the attendant, and ten minutes later he was at Eaton Place, and was shown into Emsworth's library.

"Ah, Doctor, glad to see you, but, eh? What is it? Something wrong?"

Murray told him briefly.

"I could almost read it in your face," said Emsworth. "The fool! The idiot! No, poor devil! An accident. Might have happened to any of us. But how horrible! Olive! It will nearly break her heart. We mustn't tell her."

Murray looked at him fixedly.

"Eh? You think we must?"

"He is in a grave condition."

"You don't mean that? Tut—tut—tut! Dangerous? My poor, poor girl! I suppose we must tell her before they bring him home."

"They cannot bring him home, not for weeks to come—if we can save his life."

"Worse and worse. Where do you say he is—at some house where they took him? How was it they sent for you? He was sensible then?"

Murray drew a deep breath and then completed his communication, and Emsworth started from his seat, and, forgetting his pains, began to walk up and down the room, to the window and back.

"Out with her then! A scoundrel! A judgment on him, and at her house. The miserable Jezebel. This is worse than all. He must be brought away before she knows."

"It is impossible, or I would have had it done at once."

"You would, yes, I know you would, for her sake," groaned Emsworth. "But we can't tell her then. She must think he has gone off on some mad expedition, and know nothing till he is worse or better. I couldn't look her in the face and tell her he has been such a scoundrel to her."

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"It is in the evening papers by now," said Murray, "and she is sure to know."

"Yes, she is sure to know," groaned Emsworth from the window. "Ah! Look here, man, look here!" he shouted.

As Murray reached the open window a boy was crying out papers across the way, a bundle under his arm, and one hand holding a contents bill, with, in big letters:

"Fatal Carriage Accident at Brompton. Death of Lord Braetoun."

"And you told me he was only badly hurt," said Emsworth reproachfully. "Am I such an old woman that you must break the news gently?"

"I told you the simple truth. I have just come from sending a nurse to his side. He is very, very bad, and there is nothing more to be done yet. We may save his life. I can say no more."

That "may" sent a peculiar chill through Isaac Emsworth, and he stood gazing hard at his visitor.

"What shall you do?" said Murray, whose deep voice sounded strangely impressive.

"Ha! I must go and tell her at once," said Emsworth bitterly. "Good God! What news for a father to take to the girl who is everything to him! How can I tell her? It is horrible! I never knew I was such a coward till now. Lying there, at that woman's house! Fool! Idiot! I must have been mad ever to encourage the match! I can't help it—his doing—I wouldn't be such a brute, but I can't help saying it; wouldn't it be better for her if the news that scoundrel is yelling were true, quite true?"

Murray's heart gave one great throb, and he turned pale as death.

The two men stood gazing at each other as if trying to read the thoughts that half maddened them, and at last Murray spoke as if Emsworth's question had not reached his ears.

"I am going back to Braetoun."

"No!" cried Emsworth angrily; "not yet, I feel a broken, helpless old coward, and I—I dare not face her to tell her where he lies. Can we not—keep it back about what place it is; or at all risks he must be taken home before she knows that truth."

"It is impossible, Mr. Emsworth. He cannot be moved."

"Heaven help me then! I never needed its help more. Go for me, Murray—go and break it to her—as gently as you can—you know her well; she has such trust and faith in you."

Murray shrank from him with a look of horror.

"I? I go and tell her?" he cried. "Impossible!"

Then more calmly, as he fought hard to master his emotion:

"No, you cannot mean it. If this terrible news is to be broken to Lady Braetoun, and it must be before she hears in this brutal way exaggerated and shouted through the streets. The task must come from you."

"Yes, it must come from me," groaned Emsworth, who was trembling like a leaf.

"Go at once, sir," said Murray, more calmly now. "Break it as gently as you can. Tell her in a way to make her hopeful. I'll go back to the house and see if I cannot get this woman away."

"Ah, yes; of course," cried Emsworth, snatching at the thread of hope. "Why should she know whose house it is? With care we may keep the news from her till he can be moved. And look here, Murray, money will do a great deal. Use it as freely as you like. Spare no expense. Spend thousands if it is necessary, only keep this horrible position from her ears. Come, let's go at once."

CHAPTER XXII.

An Owl of Ill Tidings.

Olive, Lady Braetoun, was in her room putting the finishing touches, with the help of her maid, to a simple afternoon costume, and the carriage was waiting at the door. Her face was pale and troubled, and a faint line was dawning upon her broad white forehead, for she had been thinking a good deal during the past few days that she would try and wean her husband somewhat from the intense and feverish love he was developing, as it seemed to her, for the race-course. For the truth was beginning to dawn upon her that his monetary troubles were on the increase, and instead of his freeing himself, as he had assured himself he would, by a few lucky *coups*, matters were getting worse, and he was constantly absent from home.

She had not seen him for five days, for he had told her that he was compelled to go down to Newmarket and also to spend two days in Surrey at his little training stable, where his mare, Belladonna, had developed some strange disease.

So Braetoun went down to the Surrey farmstead and to Newmarket, but he did not send any message home. It was Highdown Races that day, and having unwillingly become acquainted, since her marriage, with racing fixtures, Olive concluded that Braetoun would be down there and return home at night.

The line grew a little deeper in her brow as she covered her fair young face with her veil, the act seeming to draw a cloud over its sunshine, and she trembled a little, wondering how he would be when he came home—happy and bright, and eager to take her in his arms, or dull, heavy, and bitter from losses, and complaining about the agonising pains in his head.

The veil had just been secured, and Olive was thinking that she would first go and call on the Dowager Lady Braetoun, when an upstairs bell rang for Melson.

"The bell, my lady."

"Yes; it is only to say that the carriage is waiting. Go and say that we know."

"Yes, my lady."

The next minute the maid was back in the room.

"If you please, my lady, Lady Braetoun is here, in the drawing-room."

"Oh," said Olive. "I'll go down."

But there was no look of delight in her eyes, for somehow the ties of affection between her and her former chaperon had not tightened since the wedding.

Olive moved to the door, but before she could reach it there was a sharp click, it flew open, and Braetoun's mother staggered in, looking wildly excited.

"Are you all treating it like this!" she cried. "Where is he? Where is he?"

Olive turned ghastly pale, and caught her visitor by the arm.

"What is it—what is wrong?"

"Then they haven't brought him here?"

"Brought—him—— Oh!" cried Olive wildly; "then something has happened to him! Quick, Lady Braetoun," she cried, seizing her now by the shoulders in her excitement. "Pray, pray, speak! Roderick—Roderick!"

Lady Braetoun was in an intense state of excitement, and bursting into a fit of hysterical sobbing, she wailed out:

"He's killed—he's killed, and the paper said they had brought him home."

Olive reeled and fell as if suddenly struck down, and Lady Braetoun, whose hands clutched the evening paper containing the terrible news, let it fall to sink on her knees, and began to tear off her daughter-in-law's veil and bonnet.

"Oh, my lady, my lady!" sobbed the maid, wringing her hands; "it's killed her—it's killed her!"

Lady Braetoun, who was the more collected of the two, pointed to the water on the stand, for she could not speak, and for the next few minutes that, eau-de-Cologne, and salts were tried in turn, but without avail.

The maid then took the initiative, tore at the bell, and on her own responsibility sent off one of the servants to Wimpole Street with a message to Murray.

"Widowed—doubly widowed!" groaned Lady Braetoun, as she sobbed hysterically over Olive; and then, as she took

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first one and then the other cold hand to raise it to her lips, she let them fall, and knelt there gazing straight before her.

"Oh, my lady! my lady!" cried Melson; "don't you be taken like this, too."

Lady Braetoun started and turned to the maid.

"That paper—quick!" she cried; and the maid handed it to her from where it lay crumpled on the floor.

"What did they mean by 'took him home'?" she cried vacantly, as she opened the sheet and turned it towards the girl. "I can't read it—I can't read it," she moans. "Quick! Tell me."

The girl mastered her sobs, and began to read the brief account, but Lady Braetoun interrupted:

"No, no, not that; the end—the end."

The girl uttered a loud sob, hastily dashed the tears from her eyes with her apron, and then read aloud the concluding paragraph of the report.

"Yes, yes," sobbed Lady Braetoun wildly. "I see it all now, that wretched woman was with him, and they took him there."

She began gesticulating with her hands, and rocked herself to and fro, sobbing hysterically.

"Oh, Roderick, my darling, and I did try so hard to win you back from your wicked ways," she cried. "I did think that now you would have repented, and left her altogether for your wife's sake. But I might have known why you were so much from home, neglecting her as you have. Cut off in your early manhood—at a time like this! A judgment upon you for your sin!"

"Oh, hush, hush, my lady!" whispered the maid excitedly.

"No, no; the truth must come out now," wailed Lady Braetoun, who was half delirious with grief; "everyone must know of his wicked, shameless life. I tried to hide it for her sake. I tried all a mother could, but only to be mocked, ill-treated, and reviled, and now it has come home, snatched away like that in his sins, to shame us both."

"My lady, my lady!" cried the maid in a hoarse whisper, as she took the unhappy woman by the shoulders, literally shook her, and ended by clapping a hand on her lips. "Hush, don't, pray, my lady. Can't you see she's coming to, and listening to every word?"

Lady Braetoun turned and looked in Olive's direction, to find that she had recovered her senses, and had raised herself upon her left elbow, while her right hand was holding her wet, dishevelled hair back from her brow, as she stared with dilated eyes at the speaker—her parted lips and ghastly face proclaiming that she grasped the full truth of all that was being said.

"Olive, my darling," cried Lady Braetoun wildly; "don't, don't look at me like that. It wasn't my fault, indeed."

"Roderick! Dead! Tell me, then, where is he now?"

Lady Braetoun uttered a passionate cry, and sank down on the carpet, burying her face in her hands, and then burst out into a series of hysterical shrieks.

Olive crawled to her, and as she bent over she drew the unhappy woman's hands from her face, as if unrelentingly determined to know all.

"Lady Braetoun, speak to me," she said in a strange, husky voice.

"No, no, no!" sobbed the hysterical woman.

"Speak! tell me! I will know the worst!"

"I did try—so hard, and—and he did leave her—but—but he went back."

"Who is this woman?" said Olive sternly.

"I can't—I daren't tell you, my dear. It is too horrible at a time like this, for he is dead—he is dead!"

"Dead?" said Olive where she knelt now, with her hands pressed to her temples. "Dead? No—no—no, it can't be true!"

"No, no; you can't come in!" cried the maid, who had suddenly rushed to the door. "My lady is taken ill."

"Stand back, girl!" cried Emsworth angrily. "Olive, my darling!"

"Father!" she cried wildly, as she stretched out her hands to him. "Take me, oh, take me! Dead—dead!"

She sank in his arms as he lifted her from where she knelt, and her head dropped back in perfect insensibility once again.

"Too late!" groaned Emsworth, turning to Lady Braetoun, who crouched dishevelled on the floor. "Does she know the worst?"

Lady Braetoun gazed at him with a pitiful, half-imbecile look on her countenance, as her lips feebly moved, but no words came, and Emsworth involuntarily turned to the trembling maid with so fiercely-questioning a look in his eyes that she whispered quickly:

"Yes, sir; I did try to stop her, but my lady told her all."

(To be continued.)

A Faithless Sentry.

SAID the President of the military court of Trofim Stoyan:

"You have been found guilty of the crime of aiding the escape of prisoner number two hundred and seventy-nine from the mine of Gorkaya-Balka. Before sentence is passed the court desires to hear from you your version of the circumstances of the prisoner's escape, and the motives which induced you to be false to the trust imposed on you. We understand that you dispute the correctness of some of the witnesses' statements. We warn you to speak the strict truth. Stand at attention."

As the President spoke, a slim young fellow, standing between two glittering bayonets, drew himself up to the attention, glanced at the spectators, and faced the court.

"Go on," said the President.

"Your excellency," began the soldier, "I don't want mercy, and I don't expect it; but you have asked me to tell the truth and I tell it. It was on a Saturday night, snowing hard and bitterly cold. Sergeant Petroff marched me up to the entrance of Gorkaya-Balka mine, and I relieved the sentry on duty there. I was to remain until midnight, and I received the usual orders to stop anyone who tried to enter or leave the gallery and to shoot them if they persisted. I was shivering with cold and kept tramping about in front of the entrance to keep warm. After the barrack clock had struck ten I noticed someone crouching in the shadow of the old tool house—a woman, I thought. It seemed darker there

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than out in the open. The snow was driving in my face.

"I felt queer and timid that night. Turning sharply round at the end of my beat farthest from the tool house I saw approaching me the figure of a woman in black. I got opposite the entry into the gallery and stood silent. I don't know why I felt scared. There was no one else about or nearer than the overseer's house. She came swiftly over the snow, and her face was covered with a veil. I couldn't speak; it was as if my tongue was frozen. She put her hands on my shoulders, and looked up into my face."

"What was she like?" demanded the President.

"Your excellency, I cannot describe her. I only saw her eyes then, and they were on fire, and went right through me. She told me much that I cannot recall, for I was looking, not listening. But at last I understood her to be talking of her brother in the mine. She said she had come all the way from Russia to see him, and that he was dying. She said that if I would let her into the mine for a few minutes she would always pray for me, and devote her whole life to making me happy. Her great black eyes bewitched me, and I believed her. I said nothing, but pointed to the mine, and in a moment she had fled into the dark opening to the gallery. I never thought of what I was doing. I was dazed, and stood stock still, and the snow kept falling all the time, and the night was growing darker. I had my eyes fixed on the entrance, and saw the figure emerge and run towards me.

"'Soldier,' she said, 'you have made me happy for life; make yourself happy and fly with us. Let my brother pass. I will lead you and him to a place where we will be happy together. Be good to me, soldier, and I will give you all you ask from me. I will be yours. I will live for you, and die for you.'

"Don't smile, excellency. I was intoxicated with her words. I believed her. Her arms were round my neck, and her face was lovely as the Madonna's. I seized my rifle and flung it with all my strength out into the snow. She put a file into my hands, and I followed her into the gallery. There the darkness was thicker still, but we groped our way to where a man stood chained to a thick wooden stanchion. I knew what I had to do. The man said nothing, but the woman kissed me; kissed me, excellency. So I worked like a madman. He was soon free.

"We reached the entrance as the barrack clock was striking eleven. There was a whole hour yet before the guard would be changed. We ran through the little wood and crossed the frozen river, and away beyond a wide open space, where the snow was very deep, we entered the pine woods. The woman knew where she was leading us, for we came to a hut where we found clothes and food. I buried my uniform in the snow. All that night we moved rapidly through the woods, hardly speaking to one another at first. But the man and woman went on in front, walking arm in arm, and often they kissed one another, laughing and crying in turns. When I was close to them they sometimes spoke French. As soon as it was light I never let my eyes leave her face. Her eyes were large and dark, but her hair was like gold and hung down her back wet on her black cloak."

"Stand at attention, sir!" said the President sharply.

The prisoner stood erect and again resumed his story.

"The morning was clear and frosty. The man had fallen several times during the night. His strength was gone.

"I saw he was pale as death, and blood oozed from his mouth. The woman grew frantic with fear that he would be caught. The man, however, could go no farther. He lay down on the snow, just as we were leaving the woods and coming out on the steppe. I thought he would have died. I took him in my arms and carried him verst after verst until my strength was gone and I felt fever coming over me. But the woman never noticed me, and once or twice when I turned to look at her from under my burden I saw that her eyes were fixed on the face of the man I carried. I could hold out no longer. I fell on the snow and fainted. How long I lay there I cannot say. Whether or not I dreamt I am unable to tell the court. I don't think it could have been a dream. I thought I saw a troika come noiselessly over the snow, and heard the breathing of horses."

"Do you mean to tell the court this was a dream? Can you give no further particulars about the troika or its driver?" interrupted the President.

"No, your excellency; the horses were black, I thought, and I know their eyes shone brightly; the sledge also seemed to be black. It came silently, it went away with gently ringing bells, the silver bells. When I came to my senses it was snowing hard. The wet flakes awoke me, I think. I gazed around me on all sides, I was alone. I thought of my dream. There were no hoof-marks, no traces of sledge runners, nothing but the level, trackless snow. Perhaps the snow had filled up the track, perhaps—perhaps there was some other reason. Your excellency, I felt myself forsaken. I could not understand it. I was mad, and cried aloud. Suddenly I noticed pinned to my coat a scrap of paper with pencil writing on it. It was taken from me when I gave myself up, but I'll never forget the words: 'We cannot take you with us further. Save yourself as best you can. My husband and I will always pray for you.' Oh, excellency, I saw it all then, and sat down in the snow and wept and cursed. I loved that woman. Yes, I was a fool."

"And a traitor," interpolated the President, scowling.

"And a traitor, if your excellency says so; but I did not think of that then. I thought only of my love, of how I had been betrayed, of my hurt pride. Your excellency knows the rest."

"The sentence of the court is that Private Trofim Stoyan take the place of the escaped prisoner in the mine at Gorkaya-Balka. He will remain there during the pleasure of his Imperial Majesty."

That evening the young soldier was chained to the stanchion.

ARNOLD WEEVIL.

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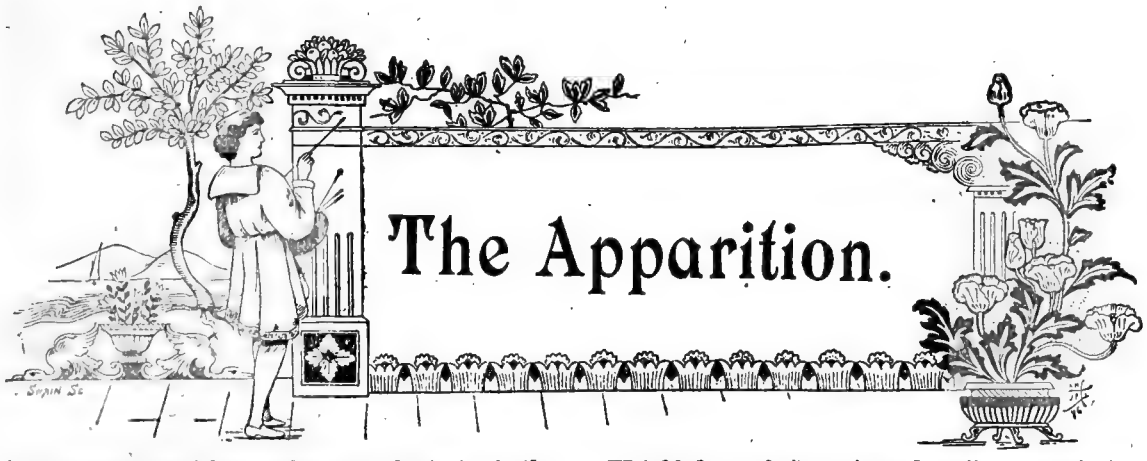

The Apparition.

The peasant stood face to face with the doctor in the background, near the bed of the dying. The old woman, calm, resigned, regarded the two men and listened to their talk. She was about to die, but the thought was not revolting. She was ninety-two and her days were over.

Through the open door and window streamed the July sun, spreading its warm rays over the brown, earthen floor, furrowed and beaten down by the wooden shoes of four generations of rustics. The odours of the fields drifted in, borne on the scorching breeze; the smell of grasses, wheat, and leaves burned by the noonday heat. The clicking sound the grasshoppers made was clear and distinct.

Raising his voice, the doctor said:

"Honoré, you cannot leave your mother all alone in this state. She may pass away at any moment."

The peasant grumbled.

"Must get in my wheat. Been too long in the fields already. The weather's just right. What do you say, mother?"

The old, dying woman, still possessing the avarice of a Normandy peasant, nodded "Yes," urging her son to get in his wheat and leave her to die alone.

But the doctor became angry and stamped his foot. "You are nothing but a brute, and I'll not allow you to do it, do you hear? If you have to get in your wheat to-day, go and find Mother Rapet, *parbleu!* and let her watch your mother. I wish it, do you hear? If you don't I'll let you die like a dog when it comes your turn to die—when your turn comes to be ill—do you hear that?"

The peasant, a tall, spare man, tortured by indecision, by fear of the doctor, and the fierce love of saving, hesitated, calculated, and blurted out:

"How much will La Rapet ask to watch?"

"Do you suppose I know?" exclaimed the doctor. "That depends on how long you want her for. Arrange that yourself with her, *morbleu!* but I want her to be here in an hour, understand," and he went out.

When the peasant was alone he turned towards his mother and said in a resigned voice:

"I'm going to get La Rapet, because that man wants her. Don't budge till I get back."

And he left the room.

La Rapet, an old woman, watched the dead and the dying of the Commune and its environs. Then, when she had wrapped her clients in the clothes they were never to leave, she took up her irons to press the garments of the living.

Wrinkled as a last year's apple, evil-minded, jealous, avaricious in the extreme, bent double, as if she had become broken by continually bending over the ironing-board, one might say that she had a sort of love for witnessing the agony of the dying.

She could only talk of people she had seen expire, of the variety of ways they had passed out of life, repeating her stories over and over again, with the minuteness of detail of a hunter recounting his adventures.

When Honoré Bontemps found her she was preparing blueing for the collarettes of the village women.

"Well, good-evening," he said. "How are things going, Mother Rapet?"

"Just the same, just the same," turning her head. "How is it up your way?"

"All right with me, but the mother's bad."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She's going to close her eyes."

The old woman took her hands out of the water, the blue, transparent drops dripping from her fingers into the tub.

"She's down as low as that?" with a sudden sympathy.

"The doctor says she won't live beyond sunrise. What'll you charge to watch her to the end? You know I'm not rich. Never could afford a servant—that's what broke mother down. She worked like ten: never stopped till she was ninety-two—you see how it is."

La Rapet replied gravely:

"There are two prices; two francs a day, three francs a night for the rich. Franc a day, two a night for the other. The other is for you."

The peasant reflected. He knew his mother to be hardy, vigorous, tenacious of life. She might last eight days in spite of the doctor.

He said resolutely:

"No, I'd rather make a price—a price to the end. I'll take the chances one way or another. The doctor say she will soon go. If so, all the better for you and the worse for me. If she holds on to-morrow or longer, I'm ahead—you're out."

The nurse, surprised, looked at the man. She had never made such a bargain before. She hesitated, thinking of the risk she might run.

"I can't say anything until I have seen the old one," she said.

"Come and see her."

She dried her hands and followed him.

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As they neared the house, Honoré said to himself: "Ah, if it is over already!" And the desire he felt manifested itself in his voice. But the old woman was not dead. She lay on her back on her pallet, her arms extended on the purple coverlet, hands frightfully thin, wrinkled, resembling crabs, contracted by rheumatism and years of grinding toil.

La Rapet approached the bed and studied the dying woman. She felt the pulse, listened to the breathing, tapped the chest, questioned her to hear her speak, then, after a final look, went out, followed by Honoré. Her opinion was formed, the old woman would not pass the night.

"Well, then?" he asked anxiously.

The nurse answered.

"Well, she'll last two days, perhaps three. You give me six francs altogether."

"Six francs—six francs!" he cried. "Have you lost your senses? Don't I tell you she will only last five or six hours?"

And they disputed a long time together. As the nurse was going away, and as his wheat would not be gathered in, he at last consented.

"Very well, that's settled; six francs, all included, until the corpse is carried away."

He strode away towards his wheat, lying in the field beneath the broiling sun that withered the stalks.

The nurse entered the house.

She had brought her work, because by the dying and the dead she worked without relaxation. Suddenly she asked:

"Have they administered the sacrament, Mother Bontemps?" The peasant shook her head, and La Rapet, who was devotional, rose hastily.

"*Seigneur Dieu!* Is that possible? I'll go and get the Curé," and she ran off towards the priest's house at such a speed that the *gamins* thought some misfortune had happened.

The priest soon came in his surplice, preceded by a choir-boy ringing a bell to announce the passing of God's sacrament. The men working in the fields doffed their great hats, waiting silently until the white vestments had disappeared behind a farm; the women gathering herbs rose to make the sign of the cross. The choir-boy, in his red skirts, walked rapidly; the priest, his head leaning on one side and mumbling prayers, followed; behind them came La Rapet, bent double as if to kneel as she walked, her hands joined as in church.

Honoré, afar off, saw them pass. He called out:

"Where is our Curé going?"

"He is carrying the good God to thy mother, *pardi!*" replied the choir-boy.

"That's good," said the peasant, returning to his work.

Mother Bontemps was confessed, received absolution, and the priest went away, leaving the two women alone.

La Rapet looked at the dying woman curiously, asking herself how long she would last.

The day was declining; a fresher air entering the chamber in puffs caused the picture of a saint on the wall to dance grotesquely. The little window-curtain, yellowed and covered with fly-specks, seemed to be struggling to fly away like the soul of the old woman.

She lay there silent, her eyes expressing indifference to death so near. Her breathing sounded harsh in the silence.

As night fell Honoré came in and approached the bed. He saw that she was still living.

"How goes it?" he asked, as he used to do when she was indisposed.

Then he sent away La Rapet after the injunction.

"To-morrow at five, without fail."

She replied:

"To-morrow—five o'clock."

She arrived at daybreak, when Honoré was eating his soup, which he had prepared himself.

"Well, has the mother passed away?" she asked.

He replied, with a cunning look in his eyes:

"She is much better," and he went out chuckling.

La Rapet was disquieted as she approached the bed, angry to find the old woman in the same position. She understood that she might last two, four, even eight days, and she was furious at the man who had played her the trick, and the woman who would not die.

She set to work, nevertheless, her eyes fixed on the wrinkled face of Mère Bontemps.

Honoré came in to lunch. He seemed happy, even jeering. Then he went out. He was harvesting his wheat under very favourable conditions.

La Rapet was getting exasperated. Every minute that passed seemed to her to be robbing her of money. She had a desire, an insane desire, to take that old hag, that old witch, by the throat and stop, with a little squeeze, the feeble breath that was stealing her time and money.

Then she thought of the danger, and other ideas came in her head as she approached the bed.

"Did you ever see the devil?" she asked.

"No," murmured Mère Bontemps feebly.

Then the nurse began to tell stories to terrorise the poor, dying creature.

A few moments before one died the devil appeared, she said. He carried a broom in his hand, an iron pot on his head, and screamed horribly. When one saw him it was all over, life would go out in a little while.

Mère Bontemps, moved with terror, tried to turn her head to look into the shadowy corners of the room, as if she expected an apparition. Suddenly La Rapet disappeared at the bottom of the bed. In the closet she found a sheet and wrapped herself in it. On her head she placed an iron pot, whose three feet curving outward resembled horns. She took up a broom in her right hand, and with her left she lifted a tin wash-boiler, letting it fall upon the floor with a resounding crash. Then stepping up in a chair she drew aside the curtain at the foot of the bed, and appeared gesticulating and screaming shrilly under the iron pot that covered her face, menacing with her broom the old peasant woman.

Overcome with an insane look, the dying woman tried to raise herself to flee. She struggled partly out of the bed-clothes, then fell back with a deep sigh.

It was over.

And La Rapet tranquilly put everything back in the closet, and with experienced hands closed the eyes of the dead. She laid a saucer of holy water on the bed, and sprinkled the room, then kneeling down, began to repeat the prayers for the dead, that she knew by heart, having learned them as a matter of business.

When Honoré entered in the evening he found her still praying, and he calculated that she had made twenty sous out of him, because she had watched three days and a night, which made only five francs instead of six which he owed her.

Le Vier.

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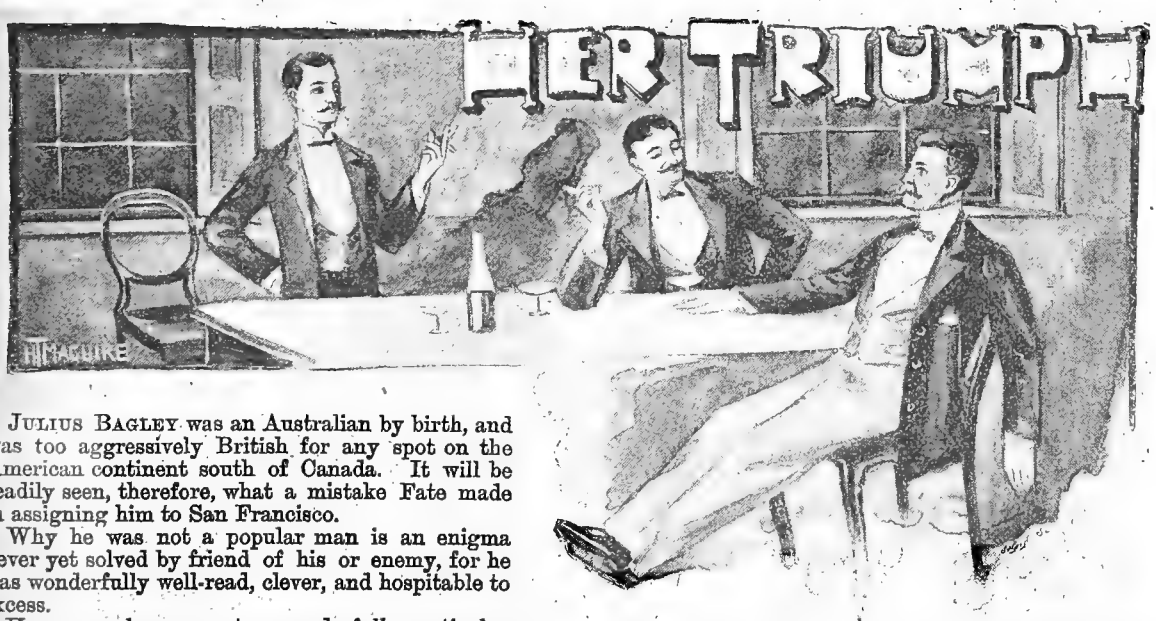
HER TRIUMPH



Julius Bagley was an Australian by birth, and was too aggressively British for any spot on the American continent south of Canada. It will be readily seen, therefore, what a mistake Fate made in assigning him to San Francisco.

Why he was not a popular man is an enigma never yet solved by friend of his or enemy, for he was wonderfully well-read, clever, and hospitable to excess.

He was a clean man, too, wonderfully particular about his appearance—clean morally, we are grudgingly obliged to admit, as well as clean physically.

When it is announced that he was a trifle below five feet in height, it is unnecessary to add that in order to make the most of his inches he ever stood as upright as a bantam chicken, and habitually wore a top hat in preference to anything lower.

In happy moments he cited history to prove that intellect lodged from choice in understood men. Napoleon was a favourite with him.

He belonged to the proper club in the town, and played cards admirably; but possessed such a vicious knowledge of what was correct play that never an acquaintance of his breathes who would be Bagley's partner of his own volition. He was unpleasant when he lost, to be sure; but he was so particularly disagreeable when he won, that those whom Fate provided to be his partners invariably succumbed to a reprehensible desire of losing the game for him.

Another vice of his was that he never became genially intoxicated. Drink he did, and sometimes hard; but its effects was to render him more Britons-never-will-be-slaves-y, and more anxious to improve upon his height than ever. Moreover, an extra glass was apt to bring to abnormally good memory some dead-and-buried rule of whist, over which our games mostly broke up in heated and unfriendly discussion.

Nor did he get on well with women. He was so prone to construe every remark of theirs into something personal and derogatory to his dignity, and to answer it sneeringly as such, that he and they had ill times of it together. Poor beggar! he tried to be amiable and fascinating, that I know. I sometimes felt very sorry for him. When he had some particularly bad dig, he would ease his tension by blowing off to us the bad training of American women. They didn't know their place. They had too much to say in outside affairs—stupid say, too. They were allowed to be impudent from their youth up. Their parents were to blame and their husbands, too.

"For goodness' sake, Bag, why don't you marry and show us what ought to be done?" growled young Grosvenor one night.

"I intend to," answered Bagley. "I intend to marry a woman with no dashed notions of independence, if I can find such a one on this free—dashed free—soil of yours. If she can't read or write, so much the better, so many less the chances of her wasting her time and getting into trouble. All a woman wants to know is how to cook well and how to mind her own business and to keep things tidy."

"Fine qualifications for a housekeeper; but say, Bag, would you find such a woman the brightest of companions?"

"Companions—stuff! A man's companions should be men," he announced blatantly, rearing his pompadour. He wore it extra long, so as not to depend entirely upon his boot-heels for additional inches.

"Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat," shouted Grosvenor, puffing himself out.

We were uneasy lest this might provoke a squall, but Julius had a grasp on a subject that interested him, he was loath to let it go for the common occupation of taking offence.

"When a man provides a woman with a home and food and clothes, he has a right to expect perfect obedience from her," he resumed stridently. "But if she is allowed several years' fling, as young girls are, he won't get it from her. Worse than all, a man really never can be sure of what he has married, so schooled are women from infancy in keeping their bad traits from cropping out. The safest thing to do is to pick out some neglected, modest girl, and train her. Teach her your ways, so that there will be no clashing of wills, no family jars. My wife shall have had no experiences before I marry her."

"But you'll keep her bountifully supplied afterwards, eh?" demanded Grosvenor rather impudently.

"What do you mean?" demanded Bagley ferociously of us all, whom he surprised grinning covertly at each other.

We hastened to explain that nobody meant anything in the least, and stuck to the lie till it saved us;

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nevertheless we held privately to the opinion that Bagley was just the man to vent upon a wife and family all those petty brutalities of temper and speech that good manners obliged him to veneer in society.

That summer he spent a month in the mountains at

"The next time you saw off your hair, consult me."

a third-rate hotel, kept by a miserly little Frenchman. We couldn't discover any attractions about the place, but Bagley assured us that the fishing was good. In the autumn he went up there again, and on his return to the city he announced that he was married. He married the innkeeper's daughter, brought her to the City, and went promptly into housekeeping.

If I confess that we were simply wild to see what sort of a woman he had married, I only state the case mildly. Our fever of expectation was aggravated by a fear that she might be such an ignorant dowdy that every pride would keep him from inviting us to the house. But we didn't know him. Matrimony—the first month of it—brought all his good points to the surface, and he one day invited Grosvenor and me up to dinner with such hospitality and enjoyment that very shame prompted us to refuse. But we went.

The house was a cosy little box, prettily furnished (Bagley was thrifty), and Mrs. Bagley fairly captivated us. Not that she was ravingly beautiful, for she was not; but she was very sweet looking, and slim, and shy, and appallingly young—she couldn't have been over seventeen. She hardly spoke a word of English either, but she did the honours of the house so charmingly and showed herself so infatuated with everything Julius said or did or thought, that we went away that night actually pleased with Julius ourselves.

Of course, we called again and again; but bit by bit, as always happens, we began to see behind the scenes a great deal. As the newness of his situation wore off, all traces of Julius's real self showed through and began to make affairs lively.

For one thing, he shamefully took advantage of her ignorance of English to badger her into making mistakes, at which he would roar loudly, and the poor little thing would laugh too, and pretend to be as pleased as pigs herself, in spite of the tell-tale flood of colour that would rise up to her hair roots.

Her name was Desiree, but he said it was too big a mouthful, and called her Sarah "for short." She smilingly begged him to call her Daisy, if he objected to Desiree, but Sarah he stuck to, and Sarah it was except when an extra stress of bad temper provoked him to "Sal."

Now this matter of a name might seem a slight thing, but after a woman gives up her surname, if she can't keep her christian name, what rights has she?

Desiree (for so we got to calling her in defiance of Bagley) was indeed ignorant—she scarcely could do more than sign her own name—but her ignorance had been forced upon her, for she was the most intelligent little lady I ever met. The way she began to pick up information from the papers and the quickness with which she mastered the language was simply marvellous.

We used to play cards up at Bagley's until twelve and one o'clock, and little Desiree would get so sleepy that she would almost tumble out of her chair, but Bagley would not let her go to bed. He must have represented it to her that it would be an insult to her guests, or so we judged from a chance remark of the little woman, and we made up our minds to clear out at ten. We did it once, but on the occasion of our following visit she begged us to stay so pathetically and glanced such imploring glances to her husband that we felt sure he had blown her up for driving us away. So of course we stayed.

After a few months Bagley got tired of showing off his wife and began to train her. The first public exhibition of his method occurred on Independence Day. Grosvenor and I had gone up to Bagley's to take him and Mrs. B. to an officers' dinner at the Presidio.

Desiree came into the room all smiles and blushes. She wore a brand-new dress, and her hair, which was orginally combed straight back from her forehead, was curled, and curled profusely. She looked radiant, pretty, and knew it, and turned her glowing face to Bagley for approbation. He scowled, and replied:

"The next time you saw off your hair, consult me. When you have gone into your room and brushed that fizz off your face I'll take you out with me, not before."

It was her first act of independence, in honour of the day, perchance, and he resolved to nip it at once.

The colour that deserted Desiree's face must have crept into mine, for I felt it sting me.

"Don't you like it, Julius?" asked she, with a catch in her voice, but smiling bravely at us, as if she enjoyed her lord's little eccentricities.

"No! I don't like it! Let me know if you are going to do as I ask or if you are not, because time presses."

"I am afraid eet will look vairy funny combed back, it ess so short. Just to-day, Julius, do let me, please."

She looked at me anxiously, with a nervous dread of his refusal, which made Grosvenor and me want to kick ourselves for seeing.

Bagley hung up his hat, sat down ostentatiously, and opened a paper. The courageous little woman stood nervously in the middle of the floor and tried it again.

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"Will you not let me go out wiz you onless I comb it my hair back, Julius, dear?"

"Either do as I tell you, or don't do it!" answered he angrily, turning upon her fiercely. "But not a toe do you go as you are! Understand that."

A look of outraged dignity displaced the intreaty on her face, and I was filled for a moment with unholy joy, expecting she would rebel, but she did the wisest thing, perhaps, in turning to Grosvenor and me, and saying sweetly:

"Wait for me the moment, please; eet will not take but a little while to make a scaircrow of myself!"

She left the room swiftly to hide the tears that filled her eyes.

Bagley wisely wrapped himself in his paper and never showed his nose above it until Desiree came back looking sweet and demure enough without her pretty curls, but lacking every trace of her former radiance and beauty.

This scene was the first of many others and in all of them Desiree showed the same sweetness and extraordinary submission, but it was easy to see that as time passed she bore with him more and more from principle, and less and less from love.

For a while our visits ceased, and when we resumed them, Mrs. Bagley had a wee bundle in her arms, which she crooned and cooed over with ever increasing delight. Bagley grew more bearable, too, and showed off his son and heir with a pride that almost resembled love.

Then a new set of persecutions began. The little bundle would be put to bed, and its mother would be forced to leave it, and sit by her husband's side and listen to how he was going to bring up his youthful son.

"My boy shall run in the streets as soon as he can stand. I won't have any woman molly-coddling him;" or, "My son is going to be a man. I won't have him fall into the clutches of the Catholic Church, or of the Episcopal Church, either. One psalm-mumbler about the house is enough." And the poor woman would murmer: "Yes, Julius," or "No, Julius," and grow pale and nervous, and smile all the time feebly, to show what a perfect loving understanding existed between her husband and herself.

Once her baby cried, and she started up to go to it, but Bagley made her sit still, and held forth on a new subject.

"Worst management in the world to take a child up the minute it cries! It puts a premium on fuss and disturbance. Let it cry!"

"But, Julius, babie is vairy young yet. Oh, leesten to the poor sweetheart! Julius, it hurts me to hear that babie cry!"

"Just stay where you are. No baby is too young to learn obedience. If you begin to pamper it, you will never leave off. I know what I am about. Sarah, let it cry, I tell you."

So Desiree sat and listened to the wails, and dug her hands into each other, and kept her strained face turned towards the door until the feeble little voice trailed off into a melancholy silence.

If ever a woman was tortured in this nineteenth century of progress and enlightment that woman was little Sarah Bagley, and we, friends of hers, respected her as we did a martyr. Her courage was superb. Hers was no fool's submission. She had temper enough flashing in her dark eyes to give way if she felt it right to do so, but you see she was very young and conscious of a certain inferiority to her husband, and I suppose Bagley was the first man that ever paid her any attentions; so many causes combined prompted her to a plan of subjection and obedience as heroic as anything I have ever seen.

If he had only treated her with actual violence we could have knocked him down and had it out with him, but as matters went we were powerless to interfere.

Bagley was fond of his wife and proud of her, especially of her cleverness—a quality that he formerly underrated in woman—but he was treating her like a dog, actually breaking her in as one would an animal. Heaven knows how she stood it. He went his strongest when any of us were near, just to demonstrate that he lived up to his precepts. Perhaps he felt safer when we were by, for a wife will put up with loads for appearance's sake.

We would have cut the man at the very start had we not felt that we showed ourselves truer friends of Desiree by sticking to him.

He was proud of his methods and he was never tired of holding forth what he would have done in such and such circumstances.

"Hubbard's a fool!" he said, one evening at the club, when we finished telling the last report of Hubbard's high-stepping better half. "A fool; I wouldn't put up with a thing like that for a moment."

"No?" I asked sneeringly. "Tell me what you'd do?"

"Do? I'd smash something. There's nothing like

Mrs. Bagley had a wee bundle in her arms.

hurling a Cologne bottle through a looking-glass for stopping any woman's tongue. I've done it, and I know."

Poor little Desiree! We did not doubt it, not one of us.

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"Come home to dinner with me," he continued affably. "Sarah has been wondering where you have been hiding lately. Come."

I have been keeping away for a fact. The truth is, I was fairly sick of the scenes up at Bagley's, and half angry with Desiree for putting up with them. But hers was not the nature that rebels, and I kept away for nearly three months.

"Come along," urged Bagley.

"But, man," I expostulated, "it's eight o'clock. They'll never keep dinner for you all this time!"

"Won't they? Come and see!" and Bagley laughed an ill-natured laugh, which told me that his wife had been trained in many unsuspected directions.

It was after eight o'clock when we arrived at his house, and Desiree looked as nearly angry as I ever saw.

She looked very pretty, too, and was carefully dressed.

"Most singulaire time to come home for dinner," she remarked promptly. "We were going to the theatre, too; did you forgotten it, tell me?"

"Well, you see, we are not going after all," he answered sourly, for he was particularly taken back at her reception of him, since he had invited me up especially to show me that "dinner time" was simply whenever he chose to dine, not before nor after.

She honoured me with a laughing welcome when she saw me, and then gave an order to the servant to bring in the dinner.

Bagley was in a shocking temper, and carped at the position of every spoon on the table. Failing to draw tears or apologies from his wife, he began in an overbearing way to make fun of her appearance, sneered at her theatre finery, donned for nothing, and objected to roses in her dress. She ignored him with her usual gentle tact, and tried to keep up a spirited banter with me, although her breast heaved, and her colour deepened at his downright insults.

Her calmness merely irritated Julius to a frenzy. When the soup came on it was naturally only lukewarm, and little circles of grease floated on the surface of each plate. The plates were of fine china, and hand-painted by Desiree. She had evidently had them brought on for my benefit.

"Bah!" ejaculated Bagley in a brutal fury. "I have told you again and again that I won't drink swill, and I won't. Now, will you remember it?"

Crash! At the question he had swept the plate off the table to the floor, where it lay in twenty pieces in a pool of greasy soup that soaked rapidly into the rich carpet.

I held my breath. Desiree held hers also, and looked for one wild, dismayed moment into her husband's fiery eyes. Then she recovered herself completely.

"You are right," she says, with at least three r's. "Perfectly right. It ees swill. Bah!" And without the quiver of an eyelash she swept her plate superbly into the middle of the room, and the two greasy pools crept amicably towards each other. Then she rang the bell, and calmly ordered the joint to be brought on.

I must say for Bagley that he knows when he has gone far enough; he took his cue from his wife, ignored the chaotic messes on the carpet, and allowed the meal to proceed to a really pleasant conclusion. But he was simply dumstruck with surprise. The conversation, as might be expected, was formal, and I did most of it—which was also to be expected. Bagley was aware that by going into the crockery business herself his wife spiked his biggest gun. The man was dazed.

Desiree had a blazing colour in her face and looked dangerous, but she invited us into the parlour after dessert with the suavity of a duchess, and never weakened once, not even when the distant tinkling of bits of soup-plate demonstrated that the work of reconstruction was going on in the dining-room. I was really afraid to leave the house, so I swallowed my objections to him as a man and a brother, and stopped to play chess with Bagley.

At ten o'clock, as was his wont, young Julius woke up and howled. After a period of irresolution, his mother arose.

"Sarah," began Bagley, with an ominous polish of tone, "sit down. Let him yell himself to sleep. It's good for him."

This last argument destroyed the balance.

"Stuff!" said Desiree with a fine appropriation of her husband's favourite ejaculation. "If it ees good for him to yale, it ees bettair for him to be attended on." And she decidedly left the room.

It was but five minutes' work for me to checkmate after this, and after the achievement I made a frantic and successful attempt to get out of the house. I was no longer afraid for the madame. In her young eyes was the strong dawn of a resolve to defy Church and State and get a finger in her own pie at last. And she did.

I told the tale all over San Francisco. You can't imagine how pleased Bagley's friends were. We rallied around little Sarah to a man, and, taking advantage of a month's absence of Bagley (he was sent on business by his firm), we took her and an aunt of Julius' to many amusements, and cheered her up, and did some training on our own accounts. In two days' time the frizz reappeared, double the quantity of it, too.

That was several months ago. She snubbs Bagley now as often as he needs it, and never turns a hair. She isn't half as sweet as she used to be, but who could expect it?

She has found her tongue at last, has got a grip on the language, and rattles away with twice the volubility of an English woman, and with a finer stock of idioms.

Bagley is just nowhere when he begins to argue with her, for she has a nimble wit, which invariably turns the laugh on him, even when she is in the wrong and knows it.

When she gets tired now she goes to bed. On cold nights she thinks nothing of enjoying the warmth of the parlour as long as possible by putting up her hair in curl papers under the very eye of the Queen's subject. Once or twice she has overturned our hands at whist, and yawningly sent us home. She is really a little spitfire, but who can blame her? If she hadn't been curbed to the kicking point, she'd be trotting along as good as gold to this very moment.

We uphold her hands, as it were, and egg her on, and the fun is immense. But the trouble is, this sort of thing is so apt to end in divorce.

Julia Schlomm.

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The Echo of an Old Romance.

THERE is not, in Ireland, a more romantic, wilder, or uncivilised spot than the one on which stands Durrie Castle, with its background of venerable mountain pine, that on three sides forms a green curtain between itself and the outer world. Tall, dark and grim, its ivy-garlanded towers look down upon a silent sheet of water and beyond to a rough bogland broken by precipitous or sloping glens graced by hazel, holly, and every description of copsewood. Now and then appear patches of fallow pasturage on which shy white cottages have sprung up, as do daisies in tall meadow grass; while over and above all rises the cloud-kissed peak of Mount Erigal, like the finger of God pointing to eternity.

We had all gone up there for the grouse-shooting, at the urgent invitation of Sir John and Lady Allison, who, having rented the castle from its (then) present owner, had torn themselves away from the frivolities of a season at Cheltenham, to study more primitive life among the Celts.

The house was like all buildings of ancient date, more or less sombre and inhospitable, the rooms being panelled in oak, the beds heavy four-posters, and the walls covered with oil-paintings, from some of which the frames were rotting away. A general air of *stuffiness* pervaded the place, and Lady Allison, herself a sunbeam, protested that, notwithstanding the introduction of every modern convenience, even the kitchen remained a veritable mausoleum.

A party of young people, however, fresh from city life, can soon change a wilderness to a rose garden; so, what with the butterfly costumes, fluttering ribbons, and gilt fans of the ladies, added to the undress uniforms and dashing manners of a rollicking quartet from the "Queen's Own," we had soon "turned the temples of Egypt into Belgravia," and startled the sleepy echoes by peals of hearty laughter.

It was on the fifth day of our visit to Durrie Castle—that—after the ladies had retired—we men, having put on our smoking jackets, gathered about the open grate in the hall; for the evenings were cool, and a nightcap of sherry is never so spicy as when warmed by pink shadows from a blazing fire of pine logs.

Sir John Allison had, I remember, been unusually jolly, rattling off tiger experiences in the Indian jungles till we younger fellows became uproarious in applause, when suddenly and unaccountably a silence fell upon us—for myself I can best liken it to that oppression in the air which precedes a thunderstorm.

At last Derlick, a youthful Lothario, brought to bay by conventionalities, broke the spell by asking:

"I say, Sir John; Durrie Castle dates from the Reformation; are there no romances interwoven with its history? It seems to me," he added, glancing at an oil painting suspended over the fireplace, "as if that young woman must have broken some hearts in her day."

All eyes turned to the portrait, which was that of a beautiful girl, dressed in a white satin gown of the Elizabethan period. No words can describe the glory of her dark eyes, which, like moons of fire, challenged admiration from beneath partly closed lids. The mouth tender, yet full of lurking coquetry, was made more winsome by a dimple in the rounded chin beneath it.

"By George!" I exclaimed, rising to examine the picture more critically. "One might almost conceive it possible, by extending the hand, to assist her down from that frame, and see her come tripping among us. I can fancy her tapping Allison on the shoulder with her fan."

Our host shivered. The light from the wax candles on the table threw trembling shadows on his face, and I observed that it paled, as he moved uneasily in his chair.

"My dear fellows," burst from his lips, with spasmodic utterance, "there is a story connected with that picture which has driven every would-be tenant from Durrie Castle for the last two centuries. Notwithstanding the fact that each successive owner has, in turn, remodelled the house, torn down, refurnished, changed and beautified——" he paused and, looking eagerly in our faces, whispered parenthetically: "The ladies must know nothing of this; they would fly the country like a flock of birds. It has only recently come to my ears, through the garrulous tongue of old Halloran, the under-gardener."

Colonel Drumgoole and de Long had been leaning forward, their eyes glued to Allison's face. Both dabbled in hypnotism, electro-biology, spiritualism and the like. De Long picked up Sir John's unfinished sentence.

"Notwithstanding all this remodelling, Durrie has a ghost?" He spoke with serious interest.

"A very uncanny one," returned our host. "It seems that in the days of Elizabeth, this young girl, a Miss Dorothy Cavendish, then serving as waiting-maid to the Queen, attracted the eye of Essex, the sovereign's favourite. You may guess the sequel. Dismissed from Court, and pursued by the vengeance of the angry lady, Miss Cavendish fled to Ireland, to hide herself with Papist friends in Durrie Castle. Jealousy was spurred on by bigotry, and the Queen sent Walter Stuart, a spy in the guise of a peacemaker, who asked, and obtained, an interview with Dorothy, in a turret chamber of the north wing. The one in which you sleep, Drumgoole." Drumgoole started, and I saw his fingers, long and white as a woman's, interlace themselves till the veins which made blue tracery in them stood out like cord.

"The exact nature of what passed during that inter-

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view, I do not know, but threats must have been followed by a struggle, during which Stuart's hands, clutching at the girl's throat, left blue marks on the fair skin. Then, so I was told, she broke from him, and springing through the window ran along on a narrow ledge that encircles the tower, holding on with both hands to the ivy. What she suffered at that terrible moment who can tell? The slender stems of the vine breaking and giving way beneath her despairing fingers while balancing himself, in hot pursuit was a bloodhound, ready to hurl her to more certain death in the darkness below. Derlick! *you* are a fatalist. Tell us if what follows was the vengeance of God or pre-ordained? With one foot on the narrow ledge and a hand outstretched to seize the fluttering skirts of his victim, Stuart was paralysed to inaction by a wail of agony, that, starting among the pine trees like the soughing of wind, spread over the entire valley. Tipping the crest of Erigal, the moon came up, piercing its way through a rugged mass of grey clouds, and flinging icy shadows on the castle walls. Horror, perhaps in anticipation of his own deed, perhaps at that awful and mysterious wail of the Banshee, froze the blood in his veins. Casting one terrified glance at the abyss beneath him, his fingers relaxed their hold, and, grasping wildly at the ivy in his descent, he fell, like Apollyon, to the bottomless pit."

"The girl?" panted Derlick, with parched lips. Even I, his companion through many a skirmish, and a worshipper of facts, laid down upon the table a wine-glass, whose contents trembled in my unsteady clasp.

"Miss Cavendish escaped. How she climbed back through the window and found her way to her friends one may surmise; but it is said that Stuart's murderous fingers left an indelible stain upon her white throat. You will observe that in the portrait she wears a neck-band of black velvet."

Was it my fancy, or did the fair Dorothy blush under the concentrated gaze of our curious eyes? In the flickering candle light it seemed to me that her red lips parted in a half-uttered sigh.

"Positively," exclaimed de Long, "I can understand the Queen's jealousy Such a woman as that would melt the heart of a Trappist monk."

"Did Elizabeth pursue her rival any further?" This from Derlick, who accompanied his question by a nervous glance over his shoulder. I, too, had thought I heard the fluttering of a fan.

"No, I believe that Dorothy was allowed to reach Scotland unmolested, where, as the wife of Sir Donald Gower, she passed a life of semi-seclusion; but it is said that the ghost of Stuart haunts the north wing of Durrie Castle, and that he will yet wreak the Queen's vengeance on any direct descendant of Lady Gower who may occupy the chamber from which she fled. Come, boys! off to your rooms. I'll wager the ghost will not bother a pack of unbelievers like us. What? Frank not able to finish his nightcap? Has a bugaboo story succeeded where cannon balls failed?" I thought his merriment forced. Drumgoole's lips, like narrow threads of scarlet wool, parted in a feeble smile.

"On the contrary," he retorted, "I am about to prove myself a hero by sleeping in the haunted chamber. Apparently Sir John has forgotten that *my mother's name was Gower.*"

He picked up his candle, and scoffing at Allison's earnest offer of another apartment, nodded a brief good-night, and the party dispersed. It was then eleven o'clock.

* * * * *

Shortly after midnight I was awakened from a first doze by a curious noise in the chamber overhead, occupied by Drumgoole. Half dazed, I sat up in bed, rubbing my eyes and listening with attentive ears. The first idea conveyed to my semi-conscious brain was that the Colonel was chasing *something* back and forth across the floor. Then I heard his window thrown open, as if by an eager, impatient hand. A thrill of unexplained terror sent the blood with electric force against my throbbing temples, as I sprang out of bed, with the vague idea of rushing to Frank's assistance; but, at this instant, a sudden tempest of wind, uprising among the pine-trees, hissed through their branches with weird effect; then, increasing in fierce velocity, swept over the valley like the snarl of a wolf or fox in its death agony, while simultaneously *something* black, and obscuring the moonlight, shot past my window, cleaving the air in its swift, downward course like a scimitar.

Pinned to the spot by a lethargy of horror, it was some moments ere I could summon courage to throw open my bedroom door and run out into the hall. At the head of a staircase leading from the floor below I met Sir John Allison, and the moonlight, shining through a hall window, showed that his face was bloodless as white marble.

"Great Heavens, McArliffe!" breathed he huskily. "What was that cry? Did you hear it?"

I gripped his arm, and, with a quick convulsive movement, drew him back into the shadow of the heavy damask window curtains.

Something was descending the upper stairs, whose banisters were composed of solid oak panelling as high as a man's waist. It was Drumgoole. He was in his night clothes, than which his face had no more colour, and both hands grasped his throat; while from between his lips, drawn, and revealing the lower teeth, came at intervals a wolf-like cry, expressive of mortal agony.

"The Hand! The Hand!" he repeated. "Take it away! The *Hand!*"

Allison sprang forward.

"Frank!" he exclaimed soothingly; "what has happened, old fellow? What has——"

The question froze unfinished on his lips; for, at that instant Colonel Drumgoole, swaying to and fro like a storm-tossed tree, fell at our feet, and bending over him we observed upon his neck the blue mark caused by garroting fingers.

What explanation have I to offer? None that can be accepted by a materialist like myself. For five weeks the Colonel lay between life and death, raving incoherently of horrors that no pen could portray, but which were ascribed by the doctor to a fevered imagination. At intervals, starting up in bed, he renewed the cry of that terrible night, begging protection from "The Hand! The Hand!"

Later, nursed back by Lady Allison with tenderest solicitude to convalescence, he showed an unwillingness to talk, replying to any direct questions by a shudder, and a pathetically uttered "Don't speak of it," that commanded silence.

Once only, just before his departure, did he indirectly, but of his own accord, refer to the occurrence.

I found him one evening standing before the portrait of Dorothy Cavendish with deep interest. Conscious that someone observed him, he turned quickly, hesitated a moment, then murmured more to himself than to me:

"Poor girl! *Poor* girl! Oh! I know what she suffered."

Ida Down.

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The Return.

The ball had commenced at seven o'clock that evening, and now, at nine, it was high tide, the sailors said, as they wiped the perspiration from their foreheads between the quadrilles.

This night they gave themselves up to pleasure—these stout fellows of Tréport—in the hall at the gates of the town. They danced in their fisher's dress; they jumped and stamped their heavy feet upon the floor, their hands open and squarely placed upon their partner's backs. The women were buxom creatures, in rude health, whom the men grasped as they would presently their oars. The violins screeched, the horns sounded, skirts whirled, laughter rose, and the many sounds united in a tumult louder than the bellow of the rising sea.

When Jean Maquenem entered, dressed in the simple uniform of a foot soldier of the line, a grey-haired waiter pointed out a corner masked by a pillar, and disdained, no doubt, as inconvenient. Jean Maquenem placed himself there and looked about him. Five hard years he had passed far away from his native village. He was about twenty-five, with blue eyes, rather deeply set, strongly built and of healthy complexion. His smile was frank, and there was nothing about him to betray the existence of any fierce passions or to indicate their absence. In fact, he was an honest fellow, a little romantic and somewhat timid.

He had sought out a place apart, wishing to be recognised unexpectedly, and rejoiced naïvely in thinking of the embraces he was about to give and receive. As he sat there, memories of his youth crowded thick upon his mind, awakened by the sight of his former companions in toil. With them, during years gone by, he had towed the boats along the channel, passed the nights upon the sea, cast the nets and worked the ship, and been buffeted by the wind and waves and rain. He also had danced with them in this hall, where he found nothing changed but himself.

But more than all else it was Marguerite Couplet whom he would rejoice to see again. As far back as he could remember she had been mixed with his life. Although simply the daughter of an innkeeper and a fisherman, from childhood she had loved to adorn herself, to remain at home, and to play less boisterous games than her comrades who ran about the quay with their boy companions. She grew to be one of the most beautiful girls in the province. No other woman had stirred the heart of Jean Maquenem as she did when she walked abroad, dressed in her short red skirt, showing her slender ankles and pretty feet incased in leather shoes whose wooden soles clicked upon the flagstones; her graceful waist moulded in a tight corsage, her cap with long violet bands tied under her chin, and great gold ornaments of Norman pattern hanging from her ears. And he had pleased her so much more than the others, that for eighteen months he had remained her lover, and when they parted she vowed to await his return.

Soon he saw her descending the stairs for a quadrille. She was taller and browner, but still very beautiful. A red kerchief with blue flowers was about her shoulders, and tied behind her waist, showing a corsage of the same shade of brown as her skirt. Her sleeves were red, and the bands of her cap dark lilac. Yet this riot of colours did not detract from the fresh, sea-tanned beauty of her face, where shone two eyes sparkling with pleasure. When she smiled she showed two rows of teeth as white and even as those of a young wolf.

The soldier noticed all these details with keen pleasure. Yet his joy would have been greater if Marguerite had not been dancing with a big, handsome fellow who treated her familiarly—a fisher, named Pierre Dominique Malatre, whom Maquenem recognised at once by his nose, like an eagle's beak, his broad forehead, and superb breadth of shoulders.

Chance brought this group under the balcony, to the place even where the dreaming lover sat leaning on his elbow against the pillar. His impatience overcame his timidity, and in a voice loud enough for the girl to hear he called twice: "Marguerite! Marguerite!" She turned her eyes, recognised her old-time sweetheart, blushed very red under her complexion like a sunburnt nectarine, and continued the dance without responding. She said only some words to Pierre Dominique, who looked also at Maquenem, nodded his head, and drew his partner into the crowd.

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This welcome was quite natural, but the soldier remained stupidly gazing at them over his empty glass. Instinctively, as dogs feel a look of kindness or of anger, he was sensible of an air of coldness or estrangement, but reassured himself with the thought that the surprise and embarrassment of meeting him before three hundred people had nonplussed the girl. He waited until the end of the quadrille, counting on approaching and speaking to her, but scarcely had the orchestra scattered abroad the last measures of their music, than he saw Pierre Dominique advancing, who gave him an ardent embrace and seated himself by his side, saying:

"Hé! La Grise, how goes it?"

It was the nickname of his boyhood, which he had not heard for years. He felt a singular, indefinable emotion of mingled pleasure and pain. Pierre Dominique continued, looking his comrade straight in the face with his yellow eyes—the colour of sand—such as sailors have sometimes:

"You have arrived in time to be present at my wedding. Two weeks more and you would have missed it."

"So much the better that I am here," said the soldier. "And mine will not be much later. Whom are you going to marry?"

"You sly dog! You know as well as I!"

"On my word of honour, I do not."

"An old sweetheart of yours, la Petite Couplet."

"Marguerite?"

"The Couplets have not two daughters, I suppose. Does that astonish you? Did you think she was going to remain four years alone, sighing for your handsome eyes, like a fish on a table gasping for water? Four years to live on hope! Know you, that it is hard for a woman. *Ma foi!* I presented myself, I pleased her, and here we are."

"And if I have remained faithful to her?" interrupted Maquenem, thunderstruck by this revelation.

"And if Paris was made of butter it would have melted long ago," replied Pierre Dominique with a hearty laugh. He continued to jest with a lightness of spirit and a confidence in himself which crushed his rival, who felt constrained by his uniform in the presence of this stolid fisher, this clear-eyed Hercules, whose breast was moulded in his knitted jacket. He was ashamed of his regulation moustache and short hair when he looked at the curling locks and thick beard, black and shining, of the sailor, who shook, in speaking, two earrings made of circles of gold in which rolled little round blue stones from the Alps. Presently the sailor left him and he mechanically dragged himself over to the table where Marguerite sat drinking with her parents.

He kissed her upon both cheeks, with the kiss of one who walks in a dream, and he could not have told whether her face was cool or burning. Her parents questioned him naturally upon his past life and projects for the future, and Marguerite laughed with such frank gaiety that the poor soldier's thoughts were in a whirl. When he arrived alone at the door of the inn where he had engaged his bed for the night, he thought confusedly, how lucky it was that he had not gone first to the Couplets to surprise his betrothed.

Yet he did not resign himself easily to his lot, but reflected much, and finally took the only course which appeared reasonable. to speak with Marguerite herself.

He dressed himself in his best next morning, but with sinking heart and little hope. He guessed that his costume of *lignard* would not please the young Normande. More ardently, more fiercely than ever, he felt returning his old love for the sea, and to reach Marguerite's home he took the street which led along the harbour and through the fishmarket.

It was the hour of marketing. Many recognised Maquenem, and greeted him with a word in passing, but they had no time to loiter. It was the sea, the great sea, which urged them forward, which called back the empty ships that it might cast into them anew its overplus of monsters. It roared yonder at the end of the pier, shouting to them all to hasten—that its rising tide would stay for none. He traversed the market, and reached, with mechanical steps, Marguerite's door.

The sailors' tavern, kept by Mme. Couplet, was upon a narrow street near the harbour, and at this hour deserted. Everyone was at the market. Marguerite generally left to her mother the task of purchasing, and Maquenem counted on finding her alone.

Marguerite was kneeling before the stove, whose cover she had removed, and was furiously scraping off the rust with an iron hook. She turned as the door opened, and greeted Maquenem with a cordial "*Bonjour*," and asked him what he would have to drink, interrupting herself to apostrophise her stove.

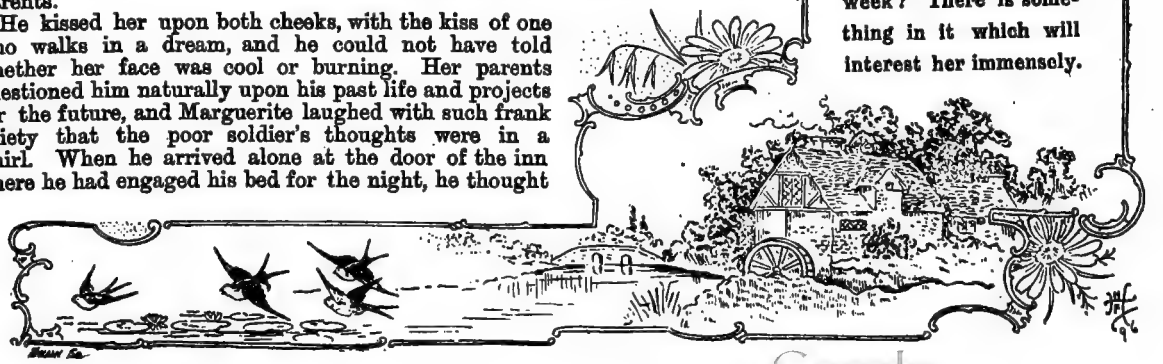
She rose quickly and shook the dust from her skirts, served Maquenem, and calmly, without affectation or coldness, seated herself near the window and began knitting.

The soldier was silent, and instinctively Marguerite ceased to speak. At last, with the superhuman courage of the player who throws his last coin upon a card and turns it quickly, he said:

"Marguerite, why have you deceived me?"

"I have not deceived you," she replied. "You departed to take up a landsman's life. I thought you would do like all the rest. Their *fiancées* await them, and when

Has your wife or your mother or your sister seen *Home Notes* this week? There is something in it which will interest her immensely.



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they return the men do not want them because they have grown old and are no longer their ideals. It is better to quit than be quitted, is it not? Those who await for years the return of their sweethearts do so because they can find no others." And she uttered a burst of false laughter, such as is common to all coquettes, *grandes dames*, *bourgeois*, or women of the people—when they jest at vows they have broken.

"Each to his character," responded the soldier. "I have kept my promise well. Now that I have returned, you should keep yours, or else you are heartless."

"Heartless!" she cried. "That is a little too strong. What if I had amused myself with the messieurs from Paris during the summer, like many others? They have proposed to me oftener than the week has days. And then I would have married you afterwards? Heartless! You would wish that I sit for ever sighing here alone! No, you are not jealous, you! You would make a fine husband!"

"I love you so!" he interrupted, casting in her face this irritating and foolish reason. Then he told her of the hopes he had cherished: how happy would have been their peaceful life; that a fisher's bride is never sure in the morning that the cruel sea will not drag her husband down before night.

"I am sprung from a race of sailors, and my husband will be one," said Marguerite.

Then he supplicated her, saying she was part of his life, reminding her of their old friendship, and how unhappy he would be if she wedded another, and much else straight from his heart.

"I love him passionately," she answered simply.

"Well, adieu!" said the soldier, after another silence. He placed upon the counter the price of his glass, and departed.

During the days which followed he lived outwardly as if nothing had happened. He organised his little house, bought some sailor clothes, and showed his intention to take service once more on one of the fishing boats of the port. He tried again, but unskilfully, to equal his boyhood companions in the terrible toil of the sea. He still loved Marguerite as only the simple know how to love. He loved her so much that he forgave her. But there was in the world one creature whom he did not pardon—Malatre. Maquenem hated him with an hatred like that of Othello for Cassio.

One January morning, the day before his wedding, Pierre Dominique was returning from Dieppe, whence he had gone to buy some ivory ornaments. He followed the path which lay like a narrow ribbon along the edge of the cliff. It was an immense solitude. The night mist had dampened the grass, which slipped and crackled under his feet. But the sailor marched gaily, calculating to himself for the twentieth time the cost of his wedding and his establishment, when a hundred steps from him, by a hillock, he saw a black mass lying across his path, and thought it was without doubt some coastguard overpowered by smugglers.

He advanced and recognised Jean Maquenem, who rose at his approach, saying simply:

"I have watched and hoped for your coming for an hour, Pierre Dominque."

"And why?" demanded Malatre, who stopped short, made defiant by the other's gaze.

"To revenge myself. You have stolen my promised bride. You must not marry her. I forbid you. Swear to me that you will say 'No' at the church to-morrow, or, as I live, you shall not pass."

"Who goes to the chase loses his place," responded Pierre Dominique gaily, believing Maquenem insane, and, from his piteous mien, judging him harmless. "If the girl loves me better than you, you should take in your horns and say adieu!"

"You shall not pass," replied Maquenem.

"Do not anger me," said the other, "or I will break your head." As he was very cool and cared little for a useless battle, he sprang forward and pushed Maquenem violently aside, and started to run in the direction of Tréport, followed by his rival who reviled him and called him, "Coward!"

Malatre ran fast, but rage seemed to double Maquenem's strength. He made prodigious bounds, and fell like a tiger upon the other's back, who, his blood burning with anger, turned and replied to the onset with a blow which would have felled an ox, but which the madman received without faltering.

Face to face, foot to foot, they began a wordless battle, the fierce blows resounding heavily. Maquenem ducked to escape a furious stroke that would have ended him, and seized the other round the body, as he was almost falling from the violence of his futile blow. So powerful was the sailor that he resisted some moments the cruel embrace which cracked his bones. Thrice was he lifted from the ground and thrice fell upon his feet. Maquenem, at the end of his strength, the veins of his forehead swollen to bursting, raised him a fourth time, and they rolled together upon the earth.

By a quick movement of his shoulders, Pierre Dominique recovered himself and forced Jean Maquenem beneath him. The latter did likewise, and each of the two combatants in turn threw over the other, and this strange, struggling, two-headed monster descended slowly the gentle slope of the hillside, like a cask that one starts rolling from a mountain top.

"Wretch!" cried Pierre Dominique suddenly, "we are going into the sea!"

The descent was steep now; the abyss ten steps away; but their course was unchecked.

"In the name of God, let me go! Let me go!" cried the sailor.

Maquenem, with nostrils contracted and cruel eyes, gave a last frantic heave with his shoulders, and together they rolled over the edge and fell upon the rocks far below, against which the rising sea dashed angrily the army of its waves, as impotent in their fury to beat down their walls of stone as is a passionate love to vanquish indifference in the heart of woman or the inexplicable cruelty of Fate.

PAUL BOURGET.

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KEY TO JUMBLED STORY No. 9.]

HIS MAIDEN EFFORT.

"I TELL you, Arnold, you are making an ass of yourself."

"I know I am," said the individual addressed, with something like a groan, "but what can I do? If I only had the courage I would clear out of Brighton this very night, but I can't, and that's the end of it. Why would I stay?"

"The girl doesn't want me, Johnson, that's clear."

Johnson blew a big cloud of tobacco smoke.

"It is not clear that the girl does not want you, but it is clear that you showed your hand too soon. The idea of a man proposing to a woman he has known only three days!"

"You need not say any more about it," said Arnold, throwing away his half-smoked cigar and picking up his hat.

"Sit down, old man," said the other; "I do believe that I have an idea. I'm going to do you a good turn. Leave it to me to find out for you what is the exact state of affairs."

"There is no use," said Arnold wearily; "and, besides, you'll make a mess of it. What is your plan?"

"Oh, it is very simple," said Johnson; "and I shall not make a mess of it. I shall supply her with a rival. It will be very easy to see from the way Miss Ralston takes it how you really stand in her eyes. Since women have no scruples about employing artifices, why should we?"

"But what will the other girl say? Will she consent to serve as a tool in this way?" asked Arnold dubiously.

"Oh, I'll make that square. My cousin, Miss Erskine, is coming down to stay with us. She is the dearest girl in the world, and would do anything for me. Just leave it in my hands. You shall see how she will enter into the spirit of the thing. But remember this, the success of the whole business will be in your chucking that infernal reserve of yours to the dogs. You must be as light as air, and go about with her as if quite oblivious to the fact that there is a Miss Ralston in the place."

With many misgivings, Arnold consented to be a party to the deception. He felt as if he were a prospective party to a burglary, or hatching conspiracy against the State.

On the evening of Miss Erskine's arrival, he dressed himself with special care and went up to the house. He was prepared to be very ill at ease with his fellow-conspirator.

But the young girl who was sitting beside Mrs. Johnson, in the drawing-room, showed no signs of conscious participation, though the proposer of the scheme had told him that she had been told all about the situation and had given her promise of assistance.

Among those who came in later was Miss Ralston. Johnson felt that his plot was going to be a success, when he saw Arnold take no more notice of her than to bow stiffly.

He wondered a little at the gift for realistic acting which his friend had suddenly and unexpectedly developed.

To look at him and Miss Erskine, you would have said they were friends of very long standing. His triumph was increased, though it was dashed by just a little remorse, as he saw Miss Ralston watching them with a peculiar look in her eyes.

"She does care for him," he said to himself; "but it serves her right to get this lesson."

Mr. Johnson gave her an opportunity of talking to him, but she made no allusion to the other couple for a long time.

Finally, she asked him how long Arnold and Miss Erskine had known each other. She seemed surprised, though she tried to hide it, when told that they had met for the first time that day.

During the next week the comedy progressed gaily. The hero and substituted heroine walked together, played tennis together, and were generally inseparable.

One evening on the pier, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson saw them passing the place where the lady sat for whose benefit the play was arranged.

"We won't have to keep it up much longer," said Mr. Johnson; "that is gloriously well acted."

But Mrs. Johnson said nothing.

All Arnold's old mopishness has flown away, too. The consciousness of coming success seemed to have settled down on him. He was no longer impatient, and instead of being the worst, had developed into the best company in the world.

Johnson one day told his wife that he believed Providence had cut him out for a diplomatist.

Every sign given by the person deceived he watched with the keen eye of a doctor observing the details and development of a pet case.

Early next week he had to go up to town. At the end of three days he came back. He was quite curious to know how the plot had progressed during his absence. Arnold was the first person he saw as he descended from the train.

He knew that there was something wrong from the expression of his face.

"Well how have things been going while I was away?" said he, with a fine professional interest.

"Splendidly," said Arnold; "you shall be the first to congratulate me, old man. It was all settled this afternoon."

"I do," said Johnson, wringing his hand with a vigour that made the other wince; "and I hope she won't be angry with me for planning the deception we played on her. Miss Ralston is a fine girl, old fellow, but a hard one to manage."

"Miss Ralston!" said Arnold; "why, my dear boy, your cousin, Miss Erskine, promised to marry me to-day."

MAGDE MORRIS.

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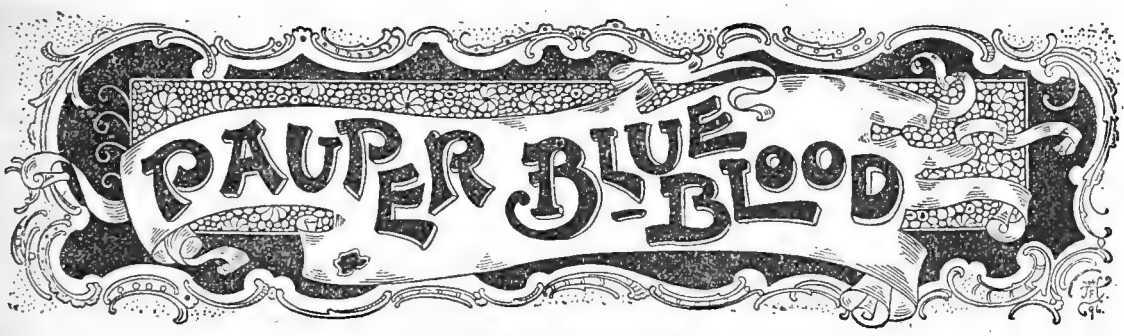

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-class Passengers," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

As Flame Amidst Straw.

Georgina, during the first few weeks of mourning, faced life in a new spirit. She was trying to use her influence to win Sefton to a better and happier frame of mind. Why not now, she asked herself, though so late? Her husband was only a weak man, and she a woman of strength and character. She could not analyse his strange emotions, ever varying day by day. Sometimes he would not speak at all; occasionally he conversed in a half-veiled, sarcastic mood, but always he seemed to be thinking. She would watch him for perhaps an hour at a time, sitting before the fire, his body sunk low in an arm-chair, his brow wrinkled, his lips moving. When she addressed him he would start as if he had been hit, and turn his eyes reproachfully upon her without replying. Now all this was distinctly trying to Lady Ravenscroft's temper, but the enthusiasm of reform was upon her, and she exercised it by petulant fits and starts.

In her efforts to improve her own stunted nature, which she considered had never had fair play, as far as religion was concerned, she discovered that her husband's feelings and impulses were contagious. His morbid conjectures and bitter jeers caught her like flame amidst straw, kindling all that was bad in Georgina to a mighty blaze.

At first she tried preaching at Sefton. But arguments and reproofs on his hardness of heart and general demoralisation only appeared to increase his fits of sulky silence or outbursts of almost childish rage.

"Can't you leave me alone? I'm sick of being nagged at," he would exclaim, dashing from the room.

Then, in despair, Lady Ravenscroft turned to the shelves of the old library, and read sermons upon influence.

She learnt pages by heart, and repeated them in the night watches, when despair laid its icy fingers on her pillow, and brought forth drops of agony upon her brow.

"It is not mere words that turn men," she murmured. "It is the heart mounting uncalled into the expression of the features. It is the eye illuminated by reason—the look beaming with goodness. It is the tone of the voice, that instrument of the soul, which changes quality with such amazing facility, and gives out in the soft, the tender, the tremulous, the firm, every shade of emotion and character."

But even as she spoke, Georgina knew full well that she could never inspire confidence or attract goodwill in the man her treachery had made her husband. While endeavouring to exert a good influence, she could only convey by words what her looks and affectations or exaggeration of manner perpetually resisted. It was a hopeless uphill struggle, and one which the woman would never have attempted save for the image of a dead child beckoning her on from the summit of the steep and stony incline.

It was like swimming in an ocean without a shore, seeking the light of the sun in a midnight hour.

So the days crept by, and Lady Ravenscroft and Sefton were as far apart as ever.

It was one Sunday evening that Georgina finally realised the hopelessness of her good intentions, and the fiery nature of that absent-minded husband she sought to guide to higher things.

She had been to church for the third time that day, and the peace of God's house appealed to her, though she joined mechanically in the service. Her thoughts were with John Reginald in the graveyard without.

When she returned she found Sefton had not waited supper, glad of the excuse to avoid her society.

She ate her solitary meal in silence, and rejoined him in the drawing-room. He was standing with his elbows on the mantelpiece, and one foot upon the brightly-polished fender.

As Georgina approached he turned and spoke.

"Why do you desecrate the church," he asked, "by your presence? You know you are a bad woman, yet you stand before God and the congregation, shameless and defiant, in my pew! You kneel on the very cushion where my father knelt before you—under the frowning monument of our ancestors! Do you ever think, when you look at it, of the sorrow and pain you brought on my mother—the curse you laid upon our family? When you talk to me of Heaven, have you forgotten that your kisses helped my father step by step down to perdition? I always knew you as a traitress, but at least I hoped you were not a hypocrite."

Georgina started back and gasped as Sefton delivered these hideous truths. She opened her lips to speak, but her throat was parched and dry.

"Why do you do it?" he hissed again, coming a step nearer. "Is it that you think me fool enough to be taken in by this assumed virtue, this acted sanctity?"

Georgina's speech came at last. She stretched out her hands in an effort of self-defence.

"I have discovered," she answered, "that holiness is happiness, I am groping after light. I have realised at last the awful truth which the whole world appears to disregard, the possibility of every individual departing with the dawn of to-morrow—yes, with the dawn of to-morrow—who will answer for a day? who will vouch for an hour? Think of it coming, perhaps to-night, upon *you*, Sefton, upon me! What could we say now if those skies were rent asunder? Is the day of probation over? *Yes!* Is all ended? *Yes!* Great God! no more time for repentance? *No!* Another year, another month, another day, or hour, before we go hence with our sins upon our heads? *No*, again *no*, *no*, and for ever!"

Georgina's passionate words broke forth from her inmost soul. She felt she had answered well, but the cold man surveyed her unmoved. Would nothing touch him? nothing banish that horrible smile which had become stationary about his lips?

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"Go on," he said calmly. "I would hear more of your terrific anticipation of futurity. I, too, believe there is a God, who will revenge the wrongs of His people. In that dread judgment I shall call on Him for vengeance!"

As Sefton spoke of retribution, his eyes grew bright as stars—wider, and fiercer; while his shattered mind dwelt upon the torments in store for the wicked.

He saw Georgina pale, and he exulted in her wretchedness, finding mad delight in her gathering despair.

A glad thought struck her in the midst of this storm. They had never mentioned their child since his death. Surely now if she held him up between them it must calm the troubled waters.

"You taunt me with hypocrisy, you make a mock of my religion," she answered; "but surely you will let me worship in peace, when I tell you I am endeavouring to fit my soul to meet John Reginald again?"

The name awoke Sefton's wild passion to merciless vehemence. Poison was in his life blood, he approached Georgina with the resistlessness of fury.

"You think," he muttered, "that such as you will foregather with that innocent, pure spirit, the child whom death robbed us of? because your blood was in his veins, therefore he was not worthy to perpetuate my name. You have the audacity to tell me, in another sphere, that your soul will be allowed to mingle with his. No, Georgina, he has been gathered to the 'inheritance of saints.' What claim can you have to that title?"

Sefton's madness in no way lacked magnetism. He was, without knowing it, breathing his spirit, and transferring his image to Georgina. There was a fund of poison in his character, infused by insanity, which taunted the woman as she listened to his cruel condemnation.

"See, now," he continued, "the worthlessness of your striving! You have missed the light—your sun has set—it went down for ever upon the prostrate body of your lover as he lay out there," pointing to the window, "under the shrubbery trees. He is with the accursed. You had better go to *him*."

A great change gradually came over Georgina as she drank in Sefton's sentences.

Her feeble footsteps, staggering along the narrow way, halted. She turned back almost with a sigh of relief.

She nodded her head mechanically, and turned towards the door.

"Don't go," said Sefton. "I've not done with you yet—I want an answer."

"To what?"

"Well, to all this talk, my pious lady!"

"Good! You shall hear. To-night I returned from church with the full hope that in time I should see the dawn of a brighter day break over our strained and miserable home. In this last hour I have tasted the horror of waiting for a dawn that never comes. Imagine yourself, Sefton, sitting through a long night, watching for the first streak of daybreak in the dark firmament above. Let the hour of morning come and bring with it no light! The outcries of a terror-stricken world would fill the air, growing momentarily more wild and frantic at the loss of the sun. A chill creeps on. I can feel the frosty winds howling across the freezing earth. The heart of the sea is frozen, and all the fellow-planets that have lost their sun become mere balls of ice, swinging silent in the darkness. I am cold now, Sefton, outwardly and inwardly. I care no more to mourn our son. You have placed him beyond my reach; you have torn out my mother's heart and trampled it under foot. All that was human in me you have turned to brute beast. How long does the lioness mourn her cubs? The world is still fair, though the future may be dark. I will taste its pleasures while I can. If I shut myself up here with you I shall go mad. Shock propriety, shall I? Oh, yes, perhaps; but life is so short. I might have been a good woman—it was just touch and go—but you must needs meddle and intervene! Now I have told you straight, take the consequences of your action. Watch the ruin of my soul, and bear it with you to the grave!"

Sir Sefton laughed. The sound came full, free, and unrestrained.

"What a scene of tragedy and comedy!" he exclaimed. "You talk as if sin were new to you, the 'ruin' of the thing you call your soul a novelty."

Georgina's teeth chattered, for the raw east winds of misery swept through her motionless body.

She saw her hopes crumble, knowing at last that her influence was not strong enough to operate on the mind of her husband. The weapons she believed in barely an hour ago seemed to have snapped into a thousand splinters. They were useless, and she stood empty-handed, flung from the heights to bitterest depths again. Reform! There was no such possibility for women like her, or men of Sefton's nature. From head to foot she felt herself a mass of discord, her spirit untuned without a nerve at unity, her sensibilities crushed—her religion dead.

The removal of her child to an invisible existence might have raised Georgina to noble habits of thought and feeling, and turned her attention to the future world from gross and transitory interests. Already the dim shadow of awakening faith had in a few brief moments of inspiration changed to a substantial and glorious reality. But Georgina was destined to tread thorny and uncommon paths—to see the sacred bond of parent and child scoffed at by a mad and reckless husband, made so by her own act—herself alone to blame from beginning to end!

She moved slowly to the door, exhausted by her late passion, yet still smarting under Sefton's cuts.

"What is my whole life but continued insult?" she cried on reaching her own room, and turning the key with a little hissing sound between her lips. "For me there is no sympathy—no love! I have fallen beneath sympathy, and death robbed me of affection. Nature has implanted the thirst—the passion for love in my soul ever since John Reginald lay cold and stiff, murdered by my carelessness—my vanity! Where are my resolves—the vague ideas of a better lot dawning for Sefton—and for me? Hope spread her unused pinions in vain. Hope is one of the faculties—the feelings—that died for ever in my heart to-night. It must be war to the end now, the infinite chasm between us growing wider."

Georgina spoke breathlessly. Her thoughts and words came ever swiftly like a rushing torrent, and, strangely enough, it never entered her head that Sefton's mind was deranged.

"I have money," she continued, "to go my own way; but then he would be glad—thankful to be rid of me! And a wife living apart from her husband—well, there is a peculiar ignominy about that; you hold yourself up as a public illustration of failure!"

Georgina flung forward her arms and beat the air. Her character had not changed since the morning she shattered her looking-glass wilfully after Sir Reginald's death.

She was the same impulsive, passionate, vindictive creature, dwarfed and stunted by the withering influence of misfortune. The dead do not know their want of life, and so this woman, whose moral sentiments were palsied by the interweaving of all that might have been good in her with a system of scheming, pushing, hypocrisy, and self, self—always self—first and foremost, must needs become degraded!

Now hate reigned uppermost in her mind—a hatred of the world, a horror of everything.

Suddenly her eyes grew feverishly bright, and the very terror of the thought that came over her was a pleasure, purely emotional, born of the love of sensation. And the thought grew swelling in her brain, till her senses reeled, chairs and sofas swam before her gaze.

"To do *that!*" she gasped, "to do *that!*"

But as yet she could not speak the thought, for it parched her lips, burnt her throat, and racked the very fibres of her being.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Self Dissection.

Georgina spoke to herself in low disjointed sentences.

"Moral courage, that is all I need. Duty, yes, I like the word, for it *is* my duty to seek the punishment I deserve. In me, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the spirit of martyrdom shall be gloriously displayed. Conscience and the divinity within my soul spurs and goads me on. I feel already the kindling energy, the solemn joy, inspired by pain and peril in the cause of justice. Oh! the blessed laws of England, that will free me from the bondage of the flesh, and give me the power of lowering Sefton's pride to the dust. I will place myself in the way of scorn, and advance to meet a death more suited than any other to bring infamy on the name of Ravenscroft."

Still dazed by excitement, and eager to revenge herself upon Sefton, she again went forth to the contest, entering her husband's presence with a blanched, ghastly face, and hair dishevelled.

"Why have you come back?" he asked, and she noticed he had not moved since she left him, but stood in the same unnatural attitude, with drooping shoulders and protruding chin.

"To tell you," she replied, "that your cruel taunts and desperate unbelief in me have not utterly quenched the light of revelation!

"I have found strength in my sorrow, strength that even conquers the fear of death. I can laugh at you now, Sefton, for some deep power, hitherto latent within, has sprung up, enabling me to look above material Nature. You might as soon try to pluck the sun from his sphere, or storm the skies with earth's artillery, as move me now from my purpose."

"What are you driving at?" he questioned sullenly. "I thought you had done with your fanatical rubbish for one night."

Georgina drew nearer. She lowered her voice, and the words seemed choking her as she continued:

"When I spoke to you just now of 'shocking propriety,' and 'tasting life's pleasures,' I meant to go back to the gay world, have my fling, and throw off the shackles of sorrow. But I see it is impossible. There is a secret weighing down my heart, a voice urging me on to give myself up to justice. Sefton, you remember how strangely sudden was our child's death. Look me in the face, and say why and how *you* thought he died!"

Her husband's eyes were bloodshot and staring as they returned her gaze.

"Why and how?" he muttered, "why and how!"

"Yes. Was it from natural causes?" He bent his head.

"You ask a riddle."

"Then listen, and I will give you the key. You remember how he slept at the ball?"

"Perhaps—he—was—dying—then?" There was a deep streak of red across Sefton's brow as he gasped out this sentence.

Georgina covered her face. "You are right," she confessed, "he was dying by my hand!"

"*Yours?*"

"I drugged him in all innocence, but, nevertheless, I am his murderess. For this crime I intend to die; to-morrow I give the story to the world. A Ravenscroft at the gallows! Think of it, husband, for you *are* my husband. In the sight of God and man we are one flesh, the vow and covenant is between us still. It is part of your being that will meet a felon's death."

He looked her up and down, as if her wild words were but the outcome of some torturing nightmare. Yet she spoke with a certain intelligence and vigour that surprised him.

"How dare you invent such a dastardly lie!" he burst forth, "you are trying to fool me with this mad talk, to satisfy your craving for tumult. If you did drug him I suppose the dose was not poisoned intentionally."

Georgina listened, a numb apathy creeping over her, which, joined to stubborn determination, hardened her set lips and deadened the light in her eyes.

"I am better out of the world—let me swing for it!" she whispered hoarsely.

"Wretched woman!" he cried, starting forward, and laying his hands roughly on her shoulders, shaking her in his desperation.

"If it was your doing, then let the weight of guilt be buried in your own breast, with the dark past that is gone. You stole the name of Ravenscroft when I was too weak to resist. You shall not sink it lower in the mire!"

"I am not your slave—at least my conscience is my own! I repeat—the grave has no horrors for me now, nothing can stand between the soul and God's mercy. This is a way of atonement. I shall not shrink!"

Georgina spoke boastfully. She only saw the picturesque side of the wild notion, her calmer mood and reasoning nature had yet to assert itself.

Gradually her lofty bearing and high flown allusions to conscience awoke in Sefton a supreme sense of the ridiculous.

Remembering himself to be the murderer, his unhinged brain saw suddenly a distorted joke in this tragic situation.

He broke into a weird peal of ribald mirth.

"Good," he cried—"very good! Give yourself up, be a fool to the end. Drink your cup of shame! Drink my health in it, Georgina—a health to the illustrious name of Ravenscroft!"

As she listened to his horrible laughter, and realised he had actually given his sanction to her sacrifice, a feeling of revolting fear leapt like flame into her blood.

The whole scene of court and scaffold passed before Georgina's mental vision. She heard the hisses of a multitude, and saw in fiery letters: "Confession of Lady Ravenscroft" glaring at her from vulgar posters. Her enthusiasm was sinking—sinking. Her moral courage had given way.

Sir Sefton was sharp enough to see it, though she said nothing. He chuckled inwardly.

"The illustrious name," she murmured at last, catching at an opportunity to retrace her steps without loss of dignity. "For the sake of that alone I would forego the privilege of dying, and carry on my burden of life."

"Fine sentiments," he replied, the mocking smile playing about his mouth. "But all women are cowards. You no more dare face the rope——"

"Hush!" with an imperative gesture; "do not goad me to the folly against which you have been pleading."

"Then in the name of our dead child, Georgina, let the subject cease. You have polluted his memory by pretence, affected fervour, theatrical show, and display! Better remain cold than pretend to feel, for in truth nothing is so despicable as noisy, assumed enthusiasm. Not one genuine emotion has risen to the surface in all your brag and bounce. Forced ardour, fictitious zeal, cant and humbug! Moral courage is not one of the virtues of our times, so don't imagine you possess it. But after all, there are compensations. You have been very amusing this evening, and it is the first time I have laughed for many a night."

Georgina could have borne anything better than that last remark, for its very truth made the sting more bitter. She raised her hands as if to ward off a blow, and fled from the room disgusted with herself.

Her emotions were at a standstill. She was too weak to sacrifice herself in atonement, she knew *that* the moment Sefton gave her free permission to be "a fool to the end." But how her life was to continue, and the future work out, she could neither guess at nor surmise.

"I suppose I shall fall back on the inevitable consolation of pursuing pleasure, and confiding in riches, fleeting transitory possessions. Not a very animating prospect, after what I had dreamed might be. Fancy looking for

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sunshine across a sky which has frowned on me for years, whose clouds are charged with tempests! It was childish and absurd. The chilling blast of Sefton's sneers would check the most promising spiritual vegetation. Flowers cannot flourish when choked by thistles or briars, nor bloom in a climate cheerless and dreary."

So she excused her evanescent mood, trying to forget the humiliating situation in which she found herself.

"Sefton would brand me with every epithet of meanness and inconsistency," she said, creeping into bed with aching head and burning temples, "so perhaps I had better live up to my reputation."

This was her last thought before she fell asleep.

The following morning Georgina awoke with a resolve.

"I must go away," she said, "for change of scene with cheerful people. I wonder what the Humpherys are doing? They have a perfect genius for amusing themselves, and study the art of killing time, not always an easy matter to accomplish! They know how to conquer the greatest foe of mankind—idleness. Their highest ambition is to enjoy life and escape being bored. At the present moment I feel the need of energy and movement!"

She shook her pillows, and rang for her breakfast in bed.

Luxury in every form was dear to Georgina's soul, yet her thoughts ran on complainingly.

She counted her grievances, till they were more in number than the hairs of her head, and mingled tears with strong coffee and buttered toast.

"If you mean to enjoy yourself," she declared, "it is no good going about it half heartedly. I am sick of the drizzling rain of sorrow, last night's good drenching downpour has cleared my horizon. I will put my misery behind me, and investigate the science of pleasure!"

She touched the bell again, too lazy to stretch out her hand for the novel that lay on the table.

"My book," she said, pointing to a yellowback, in which the heroine nobly gave herself up to justice, to save a murderer she loved. Georgina remembered the incident with a wan smile. "And a telegraph form," she continued. "Do I want a pencil? What a question! Am I to write with my fingers? Now wait, and take it down when it is ready." She addressed the form to Mrs. Humphery:

"I am sinking from *ennui*, won't you come to doctor my depression, and cheer me up?"

"A nice message for a bereaved mother to be sending through the telegraph!" said Georgina's maid indignantly to the coachman, as he rode off with the missive. "She wants to be cheered, does she?"

The girl turned away with an expressive grunt, for Lady Ravenscroft's overbearing manner made her highly unpopular in her household.

Mrs. Humphery answered the wire in person, descending upon Ravenscroft Park like a whirlwind in chiffons.

She poured forth a list of engagements "cut" (as she termed it) for the pleasure of seeing Georgina again.

"I have oceans of delicious plans if you will really be sensible, rouse yourself, and enter into them. All the tonic you need is a little harmless fun and frivolity (not too diluted with water) to put iron in your blood. Only let me prescribe, follow my treatment, and all your morbidity will dissolve. Drown the memory of the immediate past, and, if you value your reason, take a holiday from your husband. It positively gives me the blues to look at him—poor man. How he must have worshipped that child!"

"He has a naturally gloomy temperament, and is quite in opposition to the scheme of the world—pleasure! But I really believe he enjoys moping."

As Lady Ravenscroft and the irrepressible Mrs. Humphery wove schemes for the future, Sefton chafed at the presence of his wife's friend.

"It is abominable," he muttered, in the privacy of his study, "Georgina has not even the decency to mourn her son."

(To be concluded.)

SEE PAGE 363.

NEW CONDITIONS.

Jumbled Story Competition.

No. 12.

In order to lessen the amount of work undertaken by competitors in pasting up the separate lines of the story in these competitions, each line is now numbered, and all that readers need do is to write clearly on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order they believe to be correct. The title and author's name are jumbled up, and should be correctly given.

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday*,
2 awarded to the reader whose solution first
3 *JUMBLED STORY*.
4 Six Prizes—one of £5 and four of £1 each—are
5 *September 14th*, and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reaches this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose key is most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.

No. 9.

No competitor succeeded in correctly putting together Jumbled Story No. 9. The nearest competitor was Mr. H. P. Wright, 72, Evelina Road, Nunhead, S.E., to whom £5 has been forwarded. Each of the following competitors has received £1: Miss C. Buggins, St. John's Cottage, Chestnut Grove, New Malden, Surrey; Mr. F. L. Hill, 28, Lyham Road, Brixton, S.W.; Mr. E. Page, Wraysbury, near Staines; Mr. Bernard Ford, 96, King Edward Road, South Hackney; Mr. J. Ross Smyth, 11, Burrell Street, Crieff, N.B.

IN SHORT STORIES

dated October 3rd will appear the opening chapters of a new serial story by Mr. GEO. C. WALLIS, entitled

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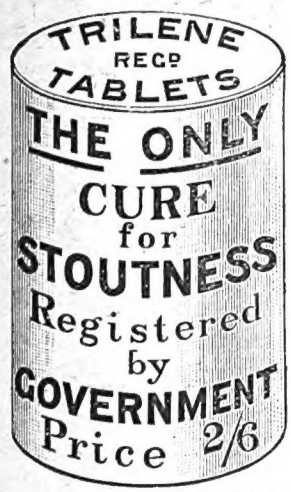

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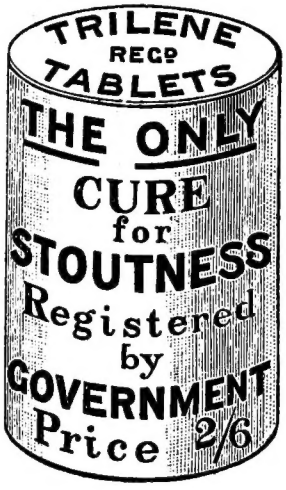

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich.
"GENTLEMEN,—I have had some boxes of your Tablets for my wife, and she has derived great benefit from them.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Illustrated Family Novelist, November 30th, 1895, says: "A great many women who are plump by nature worry about their stoutness. However, there are some perfectly safe remedies for embonpoint, among them being the Trilene Tablets, which are not only safe, but absolutely beneficial to the general health, and speedily produce the desired effect."

"1, Letterstone Road, Fulham, S.W.
"SIRS,—I found myself decreased and better for your treatment, and can get about more freely.
"Yours sincerely, F. E. GODDEN."

"6, Brighton Terrace, Hull.
"MRS. JOHNSON has much pleasure in saying she has derived great benefit from your Tablets."

"3, Castle Road, Deal.
"MRS. J. PEARSON is glad to say she is much thinner."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

"Bretton West, near Wakefield.
"MISS L. LANGFIELD has taken a box of Tablets, and is already 7lb. lighter."

"Claremont House, Shrewsbury.
"DEAR SIRS,—I have nearly finished your Tablets, and cannot speak too highly of them. They do me good in many ways, being a valuable tonic and bracer up of the nervous system, and, being of a gouty tendency, they have also done me good in that way. I am very much thinner.
"Yours truly (MRS.) K. M. ANNAND."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2 stone, and am much better in health."

Extract from *Bury and Suffolk Times*, June 15th, 1894: "Miss Atherton sings and dances as piquantly as ever, and is a marvel of agility, considering how much flesh she has put on of late. Her friends should induce her to take a course of Trilene Tablets, about which I hear wonderful things. One portly acquaintance of my own by merely a few weeks' use of these little Tablets, has reduced his bulk perceptibly. I am assured the Tablets are harmless and tasteless, and that the Trilene Company in Finsbury Pavement, London, are doing an enormous and ever-increasing trade."

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MISS GRINDROD writes: "Have had one 2s. 6d. box of Trilene Tablets, and am 5lb. lighter."

2, Charlot Street, Hull.
MR. JUBB, Chemist, says: "My customers speak highly of your Tablets."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½ stone, and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17 stone, was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15 stone."

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MISS S. WOODHOUSE writes: "I have much pleasure in stating that your Tablets are really a safe cure for stoutness; they have cured me, and I am a perfect figure now."

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131, Victoria Street, London, S.W.
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